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THE LIFE OF
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THE

LIFE

OF

FATHER BALTHASAR ALVAREZ,

RELIGIOUS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

BY F. LOUIS DU PONT,

OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

"The life of the Saints," said St. Gregory the Great, "is an efficacious instruction in virtues, and the means of acquiring them." It is a mirror in which we behold our defects and imperfections so truly and so repugnantly to ourselves, that the mere sight is sufficient to make us resolve on amendment. It is a vivid representation of evangelical perfection, and of the steps by which we are to arrive at it. It is a memorial of the wonders of God, Who is admirable in His saints, when He raises them to the height of sanctity; leading them sometimes by extraordinary ways, which we admire without being able to imitate; sometimes along ordinary and beaten paths, but in a most heroic and perfect way, wherein we can both admire and copy them. Divine Providence guided

Father Alvarez by this last-named path, so that his life is in almost everything a model for imitation. Readers, is it your desire to become truly spiritual and perfect, either in an active or contemplative life? Cast your eyes then on the steps by which this holy man ascended, and follow him according to the measure of grace granted you by Almighty God, for our advancement depends wholly on grace, provided we be at the same time docile to its inspirations, and earnest in our efforts to co-operate with it. Now let us see in what manner God guided Father Alvarez.

The first gift he received was that of prayer, by the usual method of reasoning and meditation, with a special attraction to exercise it on the life, passion, and death of our good Master.

The second, without which the first would be insufficient, was a spirit of penance and mortification in all things.

The third, peculiarly adapted to preserve and increase the two first, was a most

strict observance of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and of the other counsels embodied in the Rules of the Society.

The fourth was the grace of the priesthood, through which he daily received at the holy altar, the assistance he required to persevere in his undertaking.

The fifth was a tender devotion to Blessed Mary, to the holy angels and to the saints who, having belonged to the Society when on earth, had become his powerful protectors in heaven.

The sixth was a great zeal for the salvation of souls, with those qualifications and talents that ensure success.

The seventh was his being raised to offices, which gave him an opportunity of reaping an abundant harvest.

The eighth was a perfect confidence in the infinite goodness of God and His most sweet Providence, through which he undertook and happily accomplished the greatest works in His service.

The ninth was profound humility, without which his success might have been very injurious to him; but as humility, patience, and all other virtues require to be exercised in order to become solid and perfect, neither humiliations, sickness, or other trials were wanting to him. When he had attained the necessary degree of mortification, Almighty God raised him to a more sublime kind of prayer, that is, to contemplation. This grace was given him that he might, in the enjoyment of greater interior peace and consolation, exercise his office with more fruit. Hence He led him to unitive love; establishing him in a state of perfect conformity to the divine will in the severest trials. Lastly, when this holy man had reached maturity, Almighty God summoned him to sit at His heavenly table, though the autumn of his life had only just begun.

I wish my reader here to take notice, that grace does not necessarily follow the order laid down in the perfecting of our

holy father. The Spirit of God is not like us, subject to rules and methods. The rule of its operations is the will of God. Thus we see the lives of chosen souls intermixed with action and contemplation, with consolation and trial, with inferior and important offices, with prosperity and adversity, though without any regular or uniform system. The reader will understand, that I cannot follow grace closely in operations subject to many vicissitudes. No doubt there exists in all this an admirable order, but it is so hidden and mysterious that we do not understand it, and if I were to try to describe it according to my feeble ideas, I should utterly fail. I will therefore show in Father Balthasar the order of his virtues, and his progress in them till he attained perfection. I will then describe the exercises of his perfect life, and the lights he then received from the Spirit of God.

I have nothing more to do in order to dispose my reader to study this life with

equal pleasure and utility, but to assure him of the truth of what is here related. I declare that I shall put down nothing of which I am not certain; for, besides what I have myself known and observed, the rest has come to my knowledge either through the testimony of most trustworthy witnesses, or by the reading of a manuscript, in which the holy father noted down the communications he had with Almighty God in prayer. Lastly, as nothing so strongly proves the wisdom and holiness of a master, as the wisdom and sanctity of his disciples, I will make known in his honour the heroic example of some of his spiritual children, with whom I have lived on familiar terms, and whose virtues I know too well to allow me to doubt of their eternal happiness.

THE LIFE OF FATHER BALTHASAR ALVAREZ.

CHAPTER I.

HIS BIRTH, EARLY EDUCATION, AND ENTRANCE INTO THE SOCIETY.—HIS NOVICESHIP AND LITERARY STUDIES.

Father Balthasar Alvarez was born of a noble family, in Spain, in the town of Cervera, and diocese of Calahorra, in 1533. His father was Anthony Alvarez, his mother, Catherine Manrique. From his earliest infancy, he manifested so happy an inclination to virtue, that it was easy to foretell what he would afterwards become. His most ordinary and favourite occupations consisted in building and adorning altars in his parents' house, in making little crosses, composing pious litanies and other prayers. His truly Christian parents educated him most carefully, and that he might have time to be well grounded, made him begin his studies under a master in their own town. When he had finished his humanities, they sent him to the university of Alcala, where, after two years of philosophy, he obtained his

degree. He then applied himself most successfully to scholastic theology. During the two years he spent in this study, Almighty God, Who designed to employ him in the salvation of souls, began to prepare him for this important ministry, by giving him a strong attraction to an interior life. This was, because, in order to labour efficaciously in the sanctification of others, we must first of all use the means to become saints ourselves. The inclination to recollection which God gave him, was his guide in the choice of his friends; he attached himself more particularly to those who had the same attraction as himself, that their example might make its practice easier to him. Without doubt this was an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for if, as He has said in the Book of Proverbs, "We must converse with the wise to become wise," the means of becoming devout and recollected is to seek the society of those who possess these virtues. This good choice of friends is of great importance, especially to young people, who at that early age naturally adopt the language and manners of those who win their affection. If they are well inclined, and associate with the virtuous, they will find their good inclinations continually strengthened by this intercourse, and will derive much profit from the wise counsels of their friends. I can here cite our holy father as an example. Having become very intimate at twenty-two years of age, with a pious servant of God, he reaped the greatest fruit from his society. It was then, and doubtless at his suggestion, that

he began the holy custom of making every morning the examen of foresight, followed by a meditation on the subject to which God led him, and each evening another meditation, followed by the general examen of conscience. He afterwards devoted other intermediate hours to this holy exercise of prayer, from which he derived as much profit as pleasure, as also from his pious conversations with this friend, and from the reading of good books.

These practices, persevered in for four years, produced in his soul an ardent desire of abandoning the world, and following Jesus Christ by the way of the counsels. Later on, he spoke thus on the subject to his friends: "After considering attentively the uselessness of my former life, and my ingratitude towards God, Who had heaped so many benefits upon me, I perceived that I must seriously apply myself to the service of my Creator and the salvation of my soul, and that the religious state was that, in which I could labour at this great work with the greatest security and perfection; but one thing continually combated these good thoughts, and opposed my pious wish; it was the thought of all that my parents would not fail to say to induce me to give up this wise and salutary resolution. I seemed to hear them alleging, first, the necessity of finishing my studies, the ingratitude there would be in quitting them in their old age, and the need which two young sisters would have of me after their death, when they must look upon me as their father

These reasons, joined to my filial affection, acted strongly upon my heart, and threw me into strange perplexity." This is easily understood, especially when we read in the Book of Job, that the nerves of the devil are perplexed, for there is no doubt that it was he who suggested these thoughts to the young Balthasar.

Great, indeed, is the malice of this deceitful spirit, which it will be useful to describe for the benefit of those whom God calls to evangelical perfection. When he sees that a person has a vocation to the religious state, he omits nothing to hinder him from following an attraction, so conducive to his salvation and to the glory of God; but, of all the means which he employs, the love of parents is undeniably the strongest and the most formidable. He excites it so strongly, makes it appear so just and reasonable, and supports it by arguments so specious, that the poor soul knows not to which spirit she should give ear, to that which calls, or that which holds her back. The light of heaven was not, however, wanting to Balthasar on this occasion. Nature had set forth her reasons; God made His heard also. These gained the victory, and grace triumphed over flesh and blood; and the more easily, because God gave him to understand that being the Father of orphans, He Himself would take care of Balthasar's sisters; which promise He fulfilled later with incomparable mercy and goodness.

Though Balthasar had not yet made his choice among the religious orders, he felt a stronger

leaning towards the Carthusians than any other, considering it more suited to his attraction for recollection and penitential austerities. He opened his mind on this subject to some of his friends, especially to a canon belonging to his family, whom he knew to be a truly spiritual man. After he had carefully recommended this important matter to God, Balthasar received the following answer: "If you are quite determined to renounce the world, I advise you to enter into the Society of Jesus: for it is a rising Order in which fervour must necessarily be great." This reason appeared so convincing to Balthasar, that he resolved to enter the Society at once. He retained, during his whole life, a deep feeling of gratitude towards the canon who had given him this wise advice; and several years later, in travelling through his province, he went ten miles out of his way to see him and thank him again for the service he had done him. His vocation however arose from another source, which I must not omit to mention. This fervent youth wished to become a Carthusian, as I have already said, to lead a solitary and silent life, thus choosing the part of Mary as the better, before that of Martha; that is, preferring contemplation to action. But God, Whose Providence is wonderful in His vocations to different religious Orders, as well as in the distribution of their employments, had other designs upon him. He called him to a kind of life more excellent than either contemplation or action, considered separately, because it united both. Who can deny that this

is the most perfect life, which was the life of the Saviour of the world and of His Apostles, in which man applies himself to contemplation for his own sanctification and to an active life to save others; quitting contemplation, as St. Bernard says, for action, and returning from action to contemplation. I think this was the chief reason that led to the holy youth's call from Heaven to the Society of Jesus; for the characteristic of this institute is to labour at one and the same time for our own sanctification and for that of others, having recourse for this purpose to prayer, contemplation, and other spiritual exercises.

As soon as Balthasar saw that this was what God required of him, he at once requested to be admitted into the Society. Such is the promptitude with which we should correspond to grace. The grace of the Holy Ghost, says St. Ambrose, knows neither hesitation nor delay. When we are sure, says St. Chrysostom, that the vocation comes from God, there is not a moment to lose; the will of so great a Master cannot be too speedily accomplished. Witness the sons of Barjona and of Zebedee; Jesus said to them: "Follow Me," and at once, quitting their parents and their trade, they followed Him. Our pious youth showed equal alacrity in obeying the attraction God gave him for the Society. When he asked and obtained the favour of admission, he was still in our College of Complute, one of the most celebrated in Spain, and which has sent forth several religious who have been an honour to the Order for their virtue

and learning. His admission in 1555 was marked by several circumstances worthy of notice. He was then twenty-two, like St. Bernard when he entered the Order of Citeaux. The institute of St. Ignatius had been approved fifteen years, and so had the Order of Citeaux, when it became enriched with this great light of the Church. Lastly, Providence seemed to wish to foreshow the love he would one day have for the cross, and his zeal in imparting it to others, by arranging his admission on the 3rd May, which is consecrated to the Invention of the Holy Cross.

Soon after his reception he was sent by his superiors to Simanca, where was the general noviciate of the province of Castile and Toledo. He found it full of young men of extraordinary fervour; for the Holy Ghost had infused into them this new wine, which belongs to all newly established Orders. This was what had been promised him by his relative, the canon of Calahorra, to induce him to make choice of the institute of St. Ignatius. The verification of this promise filled him with joy, but he knew that he must do all in his power, to help to keep up the spirit of fervour of the first fathers, still so strong in their sons, lest it might become relaxed through his fault. He studied the example of the most fervent; endeavoured to imitate, and soon surpassed them in his application to mortification in all things, his progress in prayer, and other signal virtues which shone so brilliantly in the course of his life. "I will be a holy novice,"

he often said to himself; "because I wish to be a holy religious until death." He was so convinced that on the degree of fervour in the noviciate depends that of the future life, that when he became master of novices, he constantly inculcated this useful lesson. I speak here of what I have myself heard, and never shall I forget one particular exhortation in which he spoke to us as follows:

"Endeavour now to advance in the spiritual life, for, according to the ordinary course of Providence, the degree of progress you make in the noviciate, will be the rule of your future life until death. If during that time you were tepid and without zeal for your spiritual advancement, you would be so during your whole life. If, on the contrary, you are fervent novices, this fervour will become a habit that you will never lose." Is not this what the Holy Ghost wished to teach us by these words: "Man will be in his old age what he was in his youth."

But besides the testimony of the Holy Ghost, Father Balthasar here spoke from experience, remembering the fervour with which God had inspired him during his noviciate, both by His interior operations and the ministry of his master, Father Bustamente.

This Religious who had the charge of the noviciate when Balthasar entered it, quickly perceived the happy dispositions of this young man, and the designs of God upon him. He began to try him by various kinds of humiliations, mortifications, and penances, to give him each day fresh

opportunities of advancing in virtue. This method succeeded as well as the father could wish, owing to the humility and perfect docility of the good novice. Iron just out of the furnace, is not more yielding to the hammer of the workman, who has to mould and polish it, than was Balthasar in the hands of his guide, through his desire of being formed to evangelical perfection, and of having it deeply imprinted in his heart. The father, on his side, knew so well how to profit of the good will of his disciple, that Balthasar in his later life, never could say enough of the good Father Bustamente had done him; so much power have the attention and zeal of a master, to model a novice, and lead him to perfection. This was precisely what God wished this young beginner to learn from his own experience, that he might profit by his knowledge, when in his turn he became master. FF. Francis Borgia and Antony de Araoz, who were then as it were the two eyes of the Society in Spain, having come to Sentica about this time, the superiors of the house appointed Balthasar to wait upon them, that he might console them by the sweet odour of his virtues, and himself reap profit from the edification these two great men everywhere gave. Father Francis having noticed the fervour and modesty of the novice, conceived a great affection for him, and retained this feeling after he had quitted Sentica. The novice did not remain much longer in his beloloved solitude. Having often shown his fondness for the lowest offices, he was sent to

the neighbouring college to fill the place of cook. During the few months that he had this charge, he endeavoured to fulfil it, as if he had nothing else in prospect. Nothing was more edifying, than to see how far he forgot himself and his own interests, to practise charity towards his brethren, and please our Lord. Convinced that in religion all offices are honourable, he exercised that allotted to him not only without repugnance, but with holy joy, leaving the time of its duration to the providence of God, Who appoints through superiors both the times of giving up, and entering upon duties.

Having noticed the progress he had made in solid virtues, his superiors sent him to continue his studies after one year of probation. The constitutions of the Society it is true require two; but in the beginning the small number of subjects necessitated the shortening of this time of trial; and God's grace supplied the want by causing the novices to make more progress in a few months than they now do in two years. Another remarkable circumstance was, that the scholastics, amidst their studies, kept up a wonderful degree of fervour, attending to their improvement without diminishing their application to an interior life, and to prayer, without detriment to their studies. And at that time through a singular favour of God, several quitted the schools who were as remarkable for sanctity, as for their attainments in divine and human learning. He was sent to Burgos to complete the course of philosophy, which he had made

in the college of Complute. But he was found so far advanced in this science, that the professors, after examining him, judged this study unnecessary. Consequently, he was sent in a few days to the College of Abula to spend two years in the study of scholastic theology, under the Dominican Fathers of the Monastery of St. Thomas. The Society in its beginning, had not regular professors of theology; therefore our scholastics were dispersed in the Universities of Salamanca and Complute, or in the Colleges of the Dominican Fathers, where every one agreed that the course of studies was excellent. Theology was not however the only occupation of young Balthasar; the College of Abula, being newly established, had not the necessary staff. Besides this, almost everything was wanting for the necessaries of life, which caused much trouble and perplexity. He had therefore many different employments, but this was no obstacle to his taking the first rank among his fellow-students. I do not mean, however, that he distinguished himself very remarkably in scholastic theology, but in mystical theology his progress could not have been more satisfactory. He obtained, as we shall see later, by means of prayer, what others only acquire by assiduous labour, insomuch that he was capable of all the offices it pleased his superiors to give him. He filled successively and in the most satisfactory manner the place of confessor, master of novices, rector, provincial, and visitor. He directed a number of religious and secular persons in the

spiritual life with so great prudence and skill, that directors of souls may find in him a true model.

In a word, I may say that he was perfect in all things, from his entrance into religion until his death, having always before his eyes the wise advice given by St. Bernard to the religious of the monastery of Mont Dieu. "It is expected of religious, and not unreasonably, that they should be perfect, not indeed with complete perfection, but at least relative. For instance, a novice is required to be a perfect novice, a student to be a perfect student, a lay-brother to be perfect in his state, a beginner to be a perfect beginner, one who is advancing to be perfect in his progress, and a perfect man to labour still more at his perfection, following the example of the apostle, who, forgetting what he had already done, thought only of what lay before him, tending constantly to the end of his precious vocation." A novice then must possess the virtues suited to him, and in the necessary degree: and as he advances in age, his virtues should also increase. Such was the conduct of Father Balthasar, which will be clearly manifested in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II.

HIS ARDENT ZEAL TO ADVANCE IN PRAYER, AND IN FAMILIARITY WITH GOD—HIS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THIS TWOFOLD GRACE.

There are several marks which show when a man is called to great sanctity, and to do great things for God: nothing however manifests this election more clearly than a gift of sublime prayer, and the favour of being admitted to familiarity with God. "Prayer," said St. Gregory, "is a universal and most efficacious means of executing what God has ordained in His eternal predestination. When therefore you see a soul favoured with a great gift of prayer, it is a certain sign that God calls it to procure Him great glory." "Prayer," said St. John Chrysostom, "leads a soul to a pure and holy life by a thousand wonderful ways, and makes her worthy of the God whom she serves: for this great God will not put up with a poor dwelling, untidy and unadorned. As soon as He has entered by prayer, He establishes order therein, and fills it with His divine gifts, disposing it to profit by them by various noble and meritorious exercises. He bestows, for instance, a generosity of heart, a delicacy of conscience that cannot endure the slightest faults, a noble-mindedness which despises

the frivolity of the world, and the vain conversation of its votaries. When familiarity with Him is added to prayer, then all worldly things seem insupportable to the soul; she would consider it a dishonour to herself, and an insult to her Divine Spouse, to value in the least the false goods of the world. Whatever is most beautiful and charming in earthly things, to her appears only as dung. If nothing tempts her, neither does anything alarm her. Her courage is superior to toils, tribulations, pains, even death itself; she has but one fear, that of displeasing her Beloved, and, owing to the familiarity she enjoys with her Creator, her purity of heart is guarded from every attack; she acts with a holy liberty, and strong in the protection of God, there is no enemy she would not attack, no enterprise so difficult that she would not attempt." Hence the holy doctor concludes that application to prayer, and efforts to attain familiarity with God, are certain marks of virtue making progress and tending to perfection.

"When I see a Christian," he adds, "or a religious, tepid in prayer, and apparently without much esteem for it, I at once conjecture that he does not possess much virtue, and is not greatly gifted by God. But when I meet with a man that loves prayer, and is careful to perform it well, I immediately conclude that his heart abounds with heavenly graces: for if we become wise, as the Holy Ghost teaches, by associating with the wise, what degree of wisdom must not

he attain who converses familiarly with our Blessed Lord? and how abundant must be his spiritual riches?" St. Bonaventure was of the same opinion. "Prayer," he said, "is an infallible means through which we are delivered from all our evils, and obtain all goods; for when we continually beg the aid of Divine Omnipotence it is impossible He should fail to assist us."

It seemed to me useful thus to preface what I have to say regarding the sanctity and great actions of Father Alvarez, that their source may be clearly known. God gave him, in his early youth, a great gift of prayer, and when he became a novice, this virtue was at once perceived in him, and all others in due course; just as we see the light of day gradually increase until it becomes perfect. There are two methods of mental prayer: one common to all the just, the other extraordinary, which is only found in a few privileged souls. Though the servant of God excelled in both, I will only speak here of the first kind, which paves the way for the second, when it is pleasing to the Divine will. This ordinary degree of prayer depends much on our own efforts, assisted and prevented of course by Divine grace, without which, as the apostle says, we cannot even conceive a good thought, or pronounce worthily the holy name of Jesus. But with the help of grace, our understanding exercises itself without much difficulty in considering the mysteries of faith; and by reasoning, various devout affections are excited in the heart, by which we

pray, and hold pious colloquies with God Himself, as our holy Father Ignatius explains in his Book of the Spiritual Exercises.

Father Balthasar used this method of prayer in the beginning, and followed no other for sixteen years, doing all in his power to meditate well, that he might be worthy of a higher degree of prayer, if it entered into the designs of God to show him this favour. I will here mention briefly the inspirations which God gave him, to render him skilful in this holy exercise, that those who wish to become men of prayer may profit by them.

First, our Lord excited in his heart a strong desire of fervent and continual prayer. Now such a desire, when it is ardent, is usually the forerunner of special graces and heavenly favours, exciting the soul to ask very earnestly what Divine Providence intends to grant. Had not Solomon this thought in his mind when he said in the Book of Wisdom: "I desired, and understanding was given me; I prayed to God, and He bestowed on me the spirit of wisdom"? His father had said before: "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; His ear hath listened to the preparation of their hearts." This desire in Father Alvarez sprang from the high opinion he had of this holy exercise, an opinion founded, not only on what he had read and heard of the great benefit of prayer, but on his own experience of its happy effects. Prayer is indeed a hidden manna too little known, and consequently not

esteemed as it deserves. Those alone know its value, who nourish themselves with it with holy avidity. As soon as they have tasted its sweetness they become insatiable of it, according to these words of holy wisdom: "They that eat me shall still hunger, and they that drink me shall still thirst." This was exactly what passed in the heart of our holy father. His desire of prayer was so ardent, that the time appointed by the rule for this holy exercise could not suffice him. He returned to it as soon as he had fulfilled his other duties, and spent in it all his free time, thinking he could not make a better use of it. "A good religious," he used to say, "when not conversing with God in prayer, should be like a stone suspended in the air, and incapable of gravitating to its centre. Every hindrance that keeps him back from this repose should cause him uneasiness and regret; and as the stone, when the power that holds it back is withdrawn, at once falls by its weight to the earth, so should this religious return to his Creator as to his centre; carried by the weight of his love, when no longer prevented by any obstacle." He who possesses the spirit of prayer does more in one hour than others in several, because he does only what is necessary, hence time is never wanting to him to converse with God. It must however be confessed that the fervour of novices, though it springs from a good source, is rarely exempt from imperfections; self-love almost always comes in,

and Father Balthasar gives us an example of this truth.

His desire of prayer increased so much as to cause in him a certain uneasiness, and make him complain of his superiors, who, as he said, so overloaded him with occupations, that he had no time for the exercises of an interior life. This imperfection could not remain long hidden from his sight, and as soon as he became aware of it, he endeavoured to remedy it by practising resignation in his desires, and submitting to the will of God, in all things which opposed his attraction for prayer. Resignation is in fact a very necessary and important disposition for making progress in this holy exercise, according to those words of the Prophet: "Be subject to the Lord, and pray to Him;" that is, begin by desiring to pray only as much as God wills: your prayer will then be very profitable. Balthasar understood so clearly the wisdom of this advice, that he resolved no longer to desire more time for prayer than was allowed him by obedience; taking for a rule on this subject what the holy Tobias said to his son, regarding another virtue: "My son, exercise mercy as much as possible. If you possess much, give abundantly: but if you have little, give a little; but give it cheerfully." "This advice pleases me," Father Balthasar used to say, "and it would be impossible to find a wiser rule by which to regulate my desires of prayer. I must then give to it all my free time. If I have much, I will give much; if I have little, I will give little; but

never will I take from obedience to enrich prayer, for God has said that 'He hates a rapine in the holocaust.' What advantage should I gain by preferring prayer to obedience? To pray is to be with God; but if He called me elsewhere, it is certain that I should not be with Him in this holy exercise; and if I were not with Him, how could my solitude be called prayer?

"A servant who fulfils all the commands of his master, gives to each duty the time prescribed, and is willing at the same time to serve him in all things, may eat without scruple the bread he gives him. One feast of St. Matthew, when I was complaining lovingly to God that I had no time to spend with Him in solitude, I heard Him answer me interiorly: 'Be at peace, and be satisfied to work when I command it, that is better for thee than to be with Me.' This answer quieted me—filled me with joy." Enlightened by the graces, imparted to him in prayer, Balthasar no longer sought after it, but with that moderate desire which the Holy Ghost communicated to him, and which he preserved during the rest of his life.

Through this moderation in his desires, no one was more exact than he, in giving to prayer, examens of conscience, spiritual reading and other exercises, all the time prescribed by the rules of the Society. However busy he might be, he found time for everything. If he could not perform an exercise at one time, he gave his first free minute to it; and when he foresaw an unusual press of business,

he abridged his sleep to lengthen his day, and thus without omitting any exercise, found time for all the duties of obedience. When he was superior, which he was almost continually, he had more time for prayer, and he did not fail so to spend it. After the bell for retiring to rest, he went to the choir, where he spent two or three hours in this holy exercise, watching like a good shepherd during the sleep of his flock; this did not prevent his being called half an hour before the others, but this precaution was unnecessary, for generally the caller on entering his room found him in prayer. Often indeed he spent whole nights in it, following our Blessed Saviour's example, of whom St. Luke says that "He retired to the mountains to pray, and there spent the night in prayer." This Balthasar practised chiefly in his own necessities and those of his neighbour, or when he was engaged in some important business. I shall have occasion in the course of this history to mention several circumstances regarding this subject.

He never failed, in addition, to devote every year eight or fifteen days to retirement, to perform the spiritual exercises in use in the Society. If he could not be spared so long from the duties of his office, he made up for it by giving one day a month, and one morning a week to conversation with God. There is nothing more precious, used he to say, enlightened by his own experience, than these days of retreat and recollection. By this long period of recollection

and protracted prayer, fervour is enkindled, devotion increases, familiarity with God becomes more easy, zeal gains new strength to carry on holy works, and labour efficaciously for the salvation of souls. Was it not for this reason, he added, that God kept Moses six days enveloped in a cloud before calling him to the mountain? and that He kept him on the Mount forty days before He entrusted to him the tables of the law which he was to carry to the people. This great God could easily do in one moment what He did in forty days; but He wished us to learn that those who desire to become familiar with Him, must spend a long time with Him in retirement, that He may enlighten and fortify them, to enable them to execute what He commands them for His glory.

From what has been said, we may easily judge of Father Balthasar's esteem for prayer, and of his experience in that holy science; for no one who had not a high opinion of this sublime exercise, and did not know by experience the sweetness of its fruits, could perform it with so much zeal and persevere in it so constantly. By the attraction he had for it, we may also judge of his attention, reverence, devotion, and fervour in practising it; in a word, of his earnestness in giving it all possible perfection. We also know that during the sixteen years in which God kept him in meditation, he followed exactly the rules and counsels laid down by St. Ignatius in the Book of Exercises, without allowing himself the least

negligence in any point. He knew perfectly well that nothing is more pleasing to God or more strongly inclines Him to admit His friends into His familiarity, than the execution of His will in the smallest things; and that in proportion as He loves those who always obey Him, does He hate those who follow the caprices of their own will. Such also was the opinion of St. Bernard, expressed in the following passage of his forty-sixth sermon on the Canticle: "Never," said this holy doctor, "will the Spouse repose by contemplation in that heart, which, instead of bringing forth the flowers of obedience, produces only the nettles of self-will. Never will He in prayer communicate Himself to a disobedient heart, since He so loved obedience as to prefer to die rather than not obey God." The same spirit which made him adhere to the prescribed methods, prevented him from seeking any other kind of prayer, than that in which the will of God engaged him. Far from trying to rise at one flight to the highest degree of prayer, he walked with great humility in the path of meditation, aiming only at ascending in succession the steps of this mysterious ladder, and leaving to God to say to him, when it should please Him, "Friend, go up higher." "It is not safe," said St. Bernard, "to aspire at first to the highest kind of prayer. Before we ask from the Spouse the kiss of His mouth, we must kiss His feet and then His hands." Father Balthasar knew too well the wisdom of this conduct not to follow it exactly, both in his meditations

and in the operations of the purgative, illuminative and unitive way; he applied himself to the first, wishing to purify himself from all his defects, to repress and mortify his passions, and detach himself from whatever could oppose his familiarity with God. Hence, his exactness in the twofold examen of conscience prescribed by St. Ignatius, never failing to note morning and night, the faults he had noticed in his particular examen; then comparing day with day, and week with week, to see whether he advanced in virtue. We may judge of the high esteem he had of this exercise by the following words: "The particular examen is a kind of practical prayer by which we obtain the knowledge of ourselves, the root of humility, and purity of heart, dispositions absolutely necessary for a soul that aspires to familiarity with God."

To make more certain progress in prayer, he never omitted to enter into himself after this holy exercise, and to examine all that had passed, both good and evil. His object in this was, to deplore and correct any negligence he had been guilty of, and to thank God for the holy inspirations He had granted him; he had also the custom of writing them down in a little book made for the purpose, with the date of the day, the month, and the year, and of reading them occasionally to refresh his memory, and he used to say that these recollections were like heavenly sparks to his heart when, feeling cold and tepid, he wished to renew his fervour, and that he always

derived fresh fruit from them, every time he recalled them to his mind.

Remembering these words of our Saviour: "We must always pray, and never cease," he continually turned over in his mind during the day, the thoughts and affections he had had in his morning prayer, which was to him usually the means of receiving new graces, as he himself confesses in the little book I have mentioned. Having put to himself this question, "What thoughts should, during the day, occupy the mind of a man who wishes to make progress in the spiritual life?" he answers it as follows: "If he keeps his eyes open, his morning prayer, and the thoughts which it left in his mind, will make his day a perpetual festival." (Ps. lxxv. 11.) "At the court of princes," he adds, "each servant receives a portion of what is left at his master's table. Thus does God generally treat those who serve Him faithfully. He sends them in the morning, from His own table, a new relish of heavenly truths, which affords the soul a delightful nourishment and a holy occupation. This I know, from my own experience, for my soul daily receives more food than it can digest." This shows how lavishly God bestowed His favours on the holy man, since he received so many holy sentiments, that he could scarcely digest them all, though he spent whole days in thinking of them. Hence he derived that habit of the presence of God, which made recollection as easy to him in the streets as in his room. Some religious who lived with him, noticed that he

could not help shutting his eyes every minute, as if he were asleep. That arose from the custom he had contracted of shutting them, in order more easily to open those of the soul. When he was a novice and scholastic, and had to accompany one of the fathers in going out, he prayed all the time the father was employed in his business. In his journeys he acted similarly, and he used to say regarding this subject: "It is a good thing to travel or to accompany a father, for on these occasions, we can pray as much as we like." "To become truly spiritual, and a man of prayer," he used to say, "it is not enough to apply long and devoutly in the morning to this holy exercise, if we let our mind wander during the day; we must continue our prayer, thinking over the holy reflections we have made, or substituting short and frequent ejaculatory prayers." Cassian was of the same opinion, when he said, "He prays very little, who, satisfied with his regular prayer, does not fulfil the recommendation of St. Paul, 'Pray without ceasing.' Sine intermissione orate."

"But," added he, "if the prayer of the morning be insufficient to make a man interior, without those which are called ejaculatory, it may be said that these last, however frequent we may suppose them to be, are not enough without regular and prolonged prayer; because it is in the last that the fire of divine love is enkindled, which leads us afterwards to seek His presence, and prevents our being distracted and rendered tepid by the occupations of the day." Some one having asked Father

John of Avila if, to become truly spiritual, it would suffice to recollect oneself from time to time, the wise director replied: "If you do not attempt anything more, your fervour will vanish." His interrogator, desiring to know further what he should add to ejaculatory prayers: "Regular and prolonged prayer," replied the holy man.

In speaking thus, Father Balthasar only expressed what was his own constant and persevering practice. During the sixteen years that God kept him in meditation, he went through all the trials of mind and heart that are usually experienced by souls walking in this path; but, far from abandoning it with disgust, he performed it with as much zeal and constancy as if it had been easy and agreeable to him. His great resource was to confide wholly in the infinite goodness of God, before whom he presented himself, sometimes like the poor Chananean woman, asking only for the crumbs that fell from His table, sometimes like that friend, who, having been repulsed by his friend, perseveres, nevertheless, till he obtains the object of his prayer. And our holy father, after knocking for so many years at the door of our Blessed Lord, ended by obtaining a delightful familiarity with Him, and a great abundance of heavenly blessings, as we shall see in due time.

CHAPTER III.

HE EMPLOYS HIMSELF IN MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE AND PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST—THE FRUITS HE DRAWS FROM IT.

Those who begin to serve God, and to communicate with Him in prayer, feeling the necessity of being strengthened in their conversion, exercise themselves for a space of time in meditation on the purgative truths, such as the evil of sin, death, judgment, and hell, with its fearful eternity. When they have attained the end they proposed to themselves in these exercises, they go on, and apply themselves to meditation on the mysteries of the Sacred Humanity of our Saviour Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the beginning, the middle, and the end of the perfection and salvation of souls. Has He not Himself said: "I am the door: If any one enter by Me he shall be saved, and he shall go in and go out, and find pastures?" This, then, is the door by which all are to enter, the just, sinners, beginners, those who are advancing, and even the perfect themselves. All are assured that they will thus find pastures suited to the necessities and capacities of their souls; and means adapted to the special end which they have

in view, in meditating on these mysteries, as follows.

Sinners, in considering the sufferings of the Son of God, find the pastures of contrition, penance, and tears, to purify them from their sins. Beginners find in the meditation of His example, the pastures of those virtues that mortify their vices and passions, and teach them to make the flesh subject to the spirit, and sensuality to reason. Those who are making progress find the pastures of more sublime virtues and truths, which enrich them, and make them increase like the light of morning up to perfect day. As for the perfect, they here find pastures of very superior excellence, for, entering by the door of the Holy Humanity, they arrive at the contemplation of the highest mysteries of the Divinity, and, on going out, they devote themselves with fruit to the duties of charity and the works of mercy.

Such was the conduct of Father Balthasar. When he had once become acquainted with this door of sanctity, his whole occupation during the rest of his life was to go in and out, to ascend, and come down; first entering into the secrets of the Heart of Jesus Christ, whence he mounted to the contemplation of the Divinity, descending afterwards to mortify and perfect himself by the practice of solid virtues; then, returning to contemplation, which he again quitted, to labour fervently for the salvation of his brethren. We will follow him in this variety of spiritual exercises,

without, however, expecting to find anything perfectly methodical.

He began by taking our Blessed Saviour for his principal Master, according to His own counsel, when He says: "You have but one true Master, who is Jesus Christ." As man, He fulfilled this office by teaching evangelical perfection to all, by His words and actions, and manifesting to them those mysteries which up to that time had remained hidden. This, as God, He continues to do invisibly, enlightening us interiorly by His grace regarding all virtues, and inspiring us with the desire of practising them. Our holy father in his prayer loved to consider Him in this twofold point of view, sometimes forming to himself the representation of His Humanity, which the Divine light afterwards manifested to him more clearly; sometimes contemplating Him as God, speaking to the heart of His servants in interior solitude.

Placing himself in the most humble attitude, he said to God in his heart: "The Eternal Father, O my Jesus, has pointed out to each of us our duty in these words: 'This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him.' Thy office is that of a Master, mine of a disciple. Shall we not now fulfil these duties, if it be pleasing to Thee? As it is the part of the Master to speak, and of the disciple to be silent, I will keep silence and Thou wilt speak. Speak, O my dear Lord, Thy servant heareth. I will shut my eyes, to be more attentive. Because Thou art my Lord, and not

merely my Master, I will bend my knees. Since Thou art not only man, but God, I will join my hands to adore Thee, whilst I listen to Thy words. I will remain motionless in this devout posture during the whole of my prayer, notwithstanding the different temptations that may assail me, that I may not lose one single word of Thy salutary instructions. If I feel fatigue of body or mind, I will look upon it as a martyrdom, and as such I will bear it patiently, following the example of others whom I will call to mind." It may be observed in passing, that this method of listening to God in silence, practised by Father Balthasar, and which at a later period he recommended to his novices, was not the prayer of quiet, in which the soul receives the Divine illustrations without the exercise of her faculties: this he attained at a more advanced age, as we shall mention later. But the method of which we speak is a means that all may make use of in prayer. I will even say that it is necessary for performing it well, and making it really of use; by this method we prevent the wanderings of the imagination, and dispose the understanding to enter more fully into the mysteries of our Saviour's life, to comprehend more clearly the words of His holy Gospel, and what He speaks to the heart by the voice of His Divine inspirations.

At the same time that Almighty God kept Father Balthasar in the practice of meditation, He gave him a great devotion and singular esteem for the least words of the holy Gospel. He knew

well that the teaching contained in the Old Testament ought to be believed with the same faith as that of the Gospel, both emanating from the same Supreme Truth, which can neither deceive nor be deceived; but he himself preferred the words of the Word Incarnate, because he found in them more strength and efficacy in all that concerned the good of his soul. Was he deceived? Certainly not: for this Divine Master has Himself said: "The words that you have heard are spirit and life;" and St. Peter, when listening to Him said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

He derived this special devotion to the words of Jesus Christ from his high esteem for this heavenly Master, whose Sacred Humanity he regarded as the source of all spiritual blessings. And these blessings being what he sought for in prayer, he went straight to their inexhaustible source. This light was bestowed upon him one day as he was meditating on these words of the Gospel: "Jesus came down from the mountain, and a great crowd went out to meet Him." "Ah! I understand," he said to himself, "this rich and powerful God came down from heaven, and made Himself our Brother. He lived among men, and when they approached Him, virtue went out from Him, which healed and enriched them. It is through this Divine Saviour, that we are to receive all goods by the decrees of Providence: therefore we see that all the words of the Eternal Father, addressed to just souls, tend to inspire

them with a high esteem for this well-beloved Son, by Whom, as the apostle St. Peter has said, He has given us the greatest and most precious gifts."

Was it not in His name that holy Job spoke, when he uttered these words: "Instead of eating my portion alone, have I not shared it with the orphan? He was the Son of God, and He has given us the power of becoming His children. His Father placed in Him all His delight, and it is in this beloved Son that we become pleasing to Him. He is Priest, and He has imparted to us His Priesthood; He contains all things in Himself, and He communicates them to us, for in giving us Himself He gives us all things." These were the sentiments of Father Balthasar in speaking of Jesus Christ, and he added, with profound sorrow, that of all the ignorance which is so injurious to Christians, the most deplorable is, neither to know the person of this dear Master, nor the unappreciable riches that we possess in Him. Hence, used he to say, arise our dejection, our sadness, our diffidence and discouragement, as if we had neither physician, nor remedy in the evils which beset us. Thus, the brothers of Joseph, oppressed by famine, grieved inordinately, not knowing that their brother Joseph disposed of all the riches of Egypt, and that God had only exalted him, that he might be able to help them in their needs, as he told them afterwards.

These and similar considerations enlightened his mind, to understand the whole extent of the

love of Jesus Christ for men, a love which is the source of all His gifts. He said many most beautiful things on this subject, one of which was the following comparison: "The more ardent the rays of the sun, the more scorching is the heat produced by their reflection. How ardent must then have been the rays of the love of Jesus Christ on returning to their centre, after being darted forth to the heart of the Eternal Father! The strength of our Saviour's love neither admits of explanation nor of comprehension. To give us an idea of it, the prophet said of Him: 'He rejoiced as a giant to run His course,' &c. 'Exultavit ut gigas ad currendum viam, a summo cœlo egressio ejus. Et occursus ejus usque ad summum ejus, nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.' O divine love, which, proceeding from God, hast descended to men, to ascend again to God! for Thou hast not loved man for himself, but for Him who sent Thee, which has rendered Thy love so intense, that no one who considers it attentively can resist its sweet and persuasive influence! Who could behold Him, for instance, at His entrance into the world, lying on straw and trembling with cold, without burning with love for Him? Who, contemplating Him suspended to the cross, covered with wounds, satiated with insults, and bathed in blood, would not wish to take Him down and carry Him home? O, if benefits received are called chains and coals of fire, whence is it that my soul, which has received so many from our Lord, can be so cold towards this good

Master? But there is one thing, which has even more power over the heart than benefits, it is love; for, if he who bestows favours, gives a part of what he has, he who loves, gives himself with all he possesses. Now, God loves thee, O my soul, thou canst not doubt it, if thou givest ever so passing a glance at His conduct towards thee. How, then, is it that thou dost not love Him; or, rather, how is it that thou art not satisfied with a love that is sufficient for the angels? What is required to render a worldling passionately enamoured of creatures? Cold as his heart may be, it is enough for him to learn or to perceive, that he is loved by them. What then must be the hardness of mine if I do not correspond with the advances of my God, Who has loved me first, and with a love that mine never can equal in tenderness? O, my heart, if thou art pure and free from earthly affections, these reflections should suffice to set thee on fire!"

Thus did Father Balthasar seek to increase in himself the love of his dear Redeemer, and to enchain his affections, that they might not give themselves to creatures. Or, rather, this was not enough; he endeavoured daily to penetrate more and more deeply into the amiable attributes of His Beloved, and sought unceasingly for new reasons to love Him more, and value Him more highly. "O, my Jesus," would he say to Him, "how Thou art loved by those who know Thee! Thy Father loves Thee, the Holy Ghost loves Thee, Thy blessed Mother, Thy angels, Thy friends in heaven

love Thee; Thy faithful children on earth find consolation in the remembrance of Thee, and their hearts burn with Thy love; all Thy creatures praise Thee after their own way, and show Thee the most profound respect; and shall I alone disturb this harmony by the coldness of my love, and my carelessness in Thy presence? Suffer not, O Lord, that it should be so."

As he possessed such sentiments of respect and love for our Lord Jesus Christ, we need not be surprised at the fervour, with which he prepared himself to celebrate the festivals, which have for their object the mysteries of His Sacred Humanity; he then devoted to prayer all the time obedience allowed him, and by this means became inflamed with extraordinary transports of love. On these holy days, Almighty God was accustomed to heap on him His most precious favours. I will mention some instances, noted by himself in the journal of his spiritual life, where he marked down the lights, pious inspirations, holy affections, and consolations bestowed on him by the Spirit of God.

One Christmas Day, after spending the night in sweet contemplation at the foot of the crib, and amidst the shepherds, his fervour never relaxed; and at night he wrote in his journal what follows: "As I went after dinner to the general recreation, this thought occurred to my mind, I am going to join a flock of which Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd; this divine Shepherd is too good to deprive this little flock of His presence; I shall

then most certainly find Him amidst His sheep. Greatly consoled by this idea, I went joyfully to the place where I was to meet my good Master.'' One feast of the Epiphany, Almighty God bestowed another consolation upon him, which he describes as follows: "I was ardently desirous of obtaining lights and affections suited to the mystery which was the object of the festival. While I was occupied by this thought, I heard an interior voice, which said to me: 'And if God should not choose to bestow on you this grace?' 'He is the Master,' I replied; 'I willingly consent to remain in ignorance of whatever it does not please Him to manifest to me.' 'If you wish to be pleasing to God,' continued the voice, 'aridities should not be to you an object of dread, for you are more pleasing to Him in this state than in that of consolation.' After that I no longer expected the motions and lights of grace, yet I was as content as if I had obtained the accomplishment of my desires. My resignation appeared to please Him, for I did not feel the slightest degree of aridity. On the contrary, the joy of the Magi at the sight of the star, having occurred to my mind, produced in me at once a feeling of sensible devotion, which made me say to my benefactor: 'If, in this land of exile, of sorrow and misery, a star sufficed to fill the heart of the Magi with so great joy, 'gaudio magno valde,' what must be that of one to whom Thou, O my God, deignest, through Thy light, to discover Thyself?'" These words lead us to believe that God at this time

honoured him with His visit. I shall have occasion to return to this subject in a future chapter.

The passion of our Lord was of all mysteries that which most deeply affected Him. He thought of it incessantly, and meditated upon it always with sensible devotion. At this time some one having asked him what method he followed in prayer, he answered: "That, at the beginning, the wounds of Jesus Christ were presented to him: after adoring them, he listened with profound respect to the instructions of this great Master, Who, from His Cross, gives His disciples the most sublime lessons of virtue that can be imagined; this powerfully excited him to die to himself, and devote himself to the service of his neighbour, the object of so great love and such bitter sufferings." As he knew by experience the happy fruits of this mystery, he always pointed it out to beginners as the source of their spiritual advancement. "No progress can be expected," he often said to them in his spiritual exhortations, "until we reach the point of bearing always in our heart Jesus Christ crucified." That this was the case with himself may be well conjectured, from an apparition with which he was favoured, as we shall relate further on. In the mean time, let us beseech this dying God to imprint His loving image within us, to inspire us with an ardent desire of living with Him on the cross, so that we may be able to say with the apostle: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me. Christo confixus sum

Cruci. Vivo, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus."

A crucifix hanging up in his room, was for him an abundant source of graces. Often during the day he fixed his eyes on this beloved image, by which means he received extraordinary favours, great lights and sometimes extasies, entering by the sacred wounds of our Saviour into the light of contemplation, to plunge into the abyss of divine love. Not content with contemplating Jesus crucified, his attention was frequently directed to the three companions, who never quitted him from the crib to Calvary; I mean poverty, suffering, and contempt. I wish I could express with what fervour and extraordinary depth of feeling, he dwelt in detail on each circumstance. He beheld this beloved Saviour so poor, that He had not a drop of water to drink, nor a garment to cover His nakedness. He saw Him overwhelmed with such ignominy, that it would have been difficult to add fresh insults, since He was the object of the abuse, the sarcasms, and blasphemies of a whole people; and He died between two thieves, as if He Himself had been a great criminal. He beheld Him finally, a Victim to the most excessive suffering, for from the sole of His foot, to the crown of His head, not one of His members was exempt from the most cruel tortures. This consideration did not merely touch his heart, but powerfully urged him to embrace poverty, contempt, and sufferings; which compose the spiritual cross, in which the perfect imitation of Jesus crucified consists. Let

us follow him throughout his life, and we shall see what place these exalted virtues had in his conduct.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS VIGILANCE IN MORTIFYING HIMSELF IN ALL THINGS—HIS PENITENTIAL AUSTERITIES.

The spirit of perfect prayer, which leads to familiarity with God, cannot exist without entire mortification and self-denial. Generally speaking, this virtue must prepare the way for prayer, if we wish to taste its fruits. It must accompany it, to enable us to overcome the difficulties we there experience; finally, it must follow it, to preserve its precious advantages. If you wish to reach the mountain of incense, that is to obtain sweetness and consolation in prayer, first climb up the mountain of myrrh, an image of mortification, the bitterness of which is so painful to the flesh. There you will find weapons to scatter the Philistines, and banish them from the hill, where you wish to fix your tents. From thence you will ascend to Thabor, but do not hope to be able to settle yourselves there. We go there, only to drink at the fountain of Divine Love. After which, we must come down to fulfil what love requires, that is, to live in poverty, humiliation and suffering. There is no perfection without this. Jesus Christ,

Who designed Balthasar to be His perfect servant, gave him in the noviciate, with the grace of prayer, a firm and generous will to mortify himself in all things, to die to himself and all created things, without the least reserve, that he might live for God alone, and find in Him his rest and consolation. But as the flesh feels so great a repugnance to mortification, as to tremble at its very name, believing it to be an insupportable cross, for the more she flies from it, the more horrible it appears; a holy courage is required in the beginning, to make us embrace the opportunities with fervour. If our courage fails, let us call to mind these words of the gospel: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and none but the violent bear it away." "Regnum cœlorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud." If I am asked how they bear it away, I reply, not by victories over others, but over themselves, that is, by sacrificing self-love to the interests of their salvation. By this happy death, they avoid much that men suffer, who are lovers of themselves, and they attain in the end, a joyous peace, which is the kingdom of God here below. Father Balthasar used to say on this subject, that there was this resemblance between martyrs and mortified men, that the first gain eternal life by a speedy death, and the second a delightful peace by means of mortification.

As soon as he became aware of the advantages of this virtue, he courageously undertoook its acquisition, but at the same time with great skill,

taking his enemies one by one, that the victories might be easier. The first he set about attacking, was the vice of his natural character. He was disposed to be hard and severe to others as well as to himself; but by the labour of mortification, he so perfectly conquered his humour, that without ceasing to be austere towards himself, he became mild and kind towards his neighbour. The example of his father Ignatius, helped him not a little in his efforts. Every one knows that this great saint, naturally inclined to anger, reformed his character so completely, that he was thought to be phlegmatic. He aimed equally at purifying his natural affections, and with as much success. So great was his detachment, that he seemed to have neither father, mother, relations, or country. The affairs of his family were to him indifferent; he attached no importance to anything that concerned the place of his birth, and these names so dear to nature were never heard in his conversation. Having to go to Rome by a road that passed his home at three miles distance, he would neither inform his parents of his passing, nor visit them; he went to see them, however, in a later journey, but only through obedience, after having shown all possible reasons to escape the order. In vain did his parents try to make him accept gifts of money, he refused whatever they offered, to escape the obligations which gratitude entails in such cases. He held it as a principle, that a Religious should be like Melchisedech, without father, mother, or collateral relations, and should

carefully shun whatever might diminish his religious liberty.

To mortify his exterior senses, he made the resolution to do nothing in conformity with their inclinations, and to this he was constantly faithful. I will mention a few instances, for the edification of my readers. By constantly mortifying his curiosity, it became at last completely under his control, as we may judge by the following facts. During his stay in Rome, where the illustrious monuments of antiquity so greatly excite the curiosity of visitors, he did not wish to see anything but the Basilica of St. Peter, and he went thither, not so much to view this wonderful structure, as to venerate the relics of SS. Peter and Paul. He spent in prayer there all the time he had at his disposal, while his companions went through the town, admiring all the wonders it presents to view. When he was rector of the College of Métine, several persons remarked, that during the procession on Corpus Christi, he had his eyes constantly fixed on the Sacred Host, and never allowed himself one single glance at the decorations of the streets through which he passed. Being one day present at a trial of the inquisition, he was so placed, that he could neither look at the accused nor the judges, without seeing at the same time, a number of women who were seated opposite: this appearing to him equally indecorous and inconvenient, he drew from his pocket a picture of the Blessed Virgin, which he always carried about him, and so fixed upon it

his eyes and heart, that he heard nothing that passed, and did not lose sight of his picture during the space of seven hours.

He took no less pains to mortify his taste. Whenever the kind of food was pleasing to him, he refused it, and he always restricted himself in what he did take; saying, that it was right to share God's benefits with Himself. He never allowed any particular dish to be prepared for him; and when it was done, contrary to his will, he divided it with those who sat near him: and if he received a better portion than the others, he never failed to exchange it, for that of his next neighbour. It happened sometimes that he was supplied with fresher bread than the rest; as soon, however, as he noticed it, he adroitly changed it for that of another. Often when he entered his room, he found fruit or sweetmeats sent to him from the town, but he very quickly carried them to the infirmary.

In sickness, the more disgust he felt for food, the greater violence he offered himself, to take what was brought to him, because he thus found an opportunity of mortifying his taste, and of practising patience. When a disagreeable or bitter medicine was offered him, he did not at once swallow it, as is the usual custom, but took it slowly and at intervals, and kept the last mouthful some time, that he might the longer taste its insipidity or bitterness. During his convalescence the cook one day dressed him a chicken, from which nothing but the feathers had been

removed, for through carelessness, he had cooked it without opening it, and it had an abominable taste. He ate of it, nevertheless, to mortify himself, till the brother who was serving, noticing the mistake of the cook, carried away this unpleasant dish. In the exercise of this kind of mortification, he neglected nothing to escape notice, having no wish to be reputed a mortified man: but it was of no use; those who surrounded him watched his conduct too attentively, to allow such edifying examples to escape them.

One day, going into an inn to take some refreshment, he could take nothing but an egg, as his stomach could not bear more solid food: he asked to have it boiled, which was quickly done, but he disposed of it still more speedily; in taking it he purposely let it fall, and that this might not be noticed, made a sign by which it would appear that it was an accident. His companion did not think so, however, he knew him too well not to guess that mortification had caused this sacrifice.

Perfumes were insupportable to him, except in the church, or the infirmary, when it was necessary to purify the air. He endeavoured, on the contrary, to mortify his sense of smell, by subjecting it to unpleasant odours. For this purpose he voluntarily took upon himself the cleansing of the most unclean places, reserving this office to himself, when he was superior. In every house to which he was sent by obedience, the most inconvenient room suited him best, because he there

found more opportunities of mortification. At Abula, he chose for his accommodation, a cell so narrow that he could scarcely turn round, and so poor, that it had no furniture, not even a table for writing. There was nothing but a shelf hung to the wall, on which he placed his books and papers. He never used any kind of chair: his seat was a wooden stool, even during his convalescence.

Finally, he was very austere to himself, and he tried to justify the severity which he exercised towards his body in the following manner: "A soul wounded by the love of Jesus Christ, cannot rest unless her body share this blessed wound; otherwise it seems to her she neither loves nor imitates Him as she ought: she thinks she does not love enough when the arrow which pierces her heart does not touch her body; she considers her imitation imperfect, because she knows that her Saviour suffered equally in His body and soul. If, then, our Lord do not send her sickness or infirmities, she supplies for it by the austerities of penance." This holy religious was the more zealous in practising corporal mortifications, seeing that they had been specially recommended by St. Ignatius in his Book of Exercises, and were in vigorous use in the Society. The first Jesuits, indeed, constantly wore the hair-shirt. They took the discipline for a quarter of an hour, morning and evening, slept on boards, took only one meal a day, spent several hours with their arms extended in the form of a cross, and added thereto

several painful practices with which divine love inspired them. It was a subject of emulation among them; but they were all surpassed by Father Balthasar, to whom the authority of superior, which he almost always possessed, gave the liberty of ill-treating himself as much as he desired. His disciplines were so severe that the novices of Mitica used to say in joke: "When our Father Balthasar chastises his body, he does it with such force, that the side of the house in which he lives shakes, as if there were an earthquake." In fact he spared himself so little, that the Provincial was obliged to regulate the number and method of his blows. His confessor, too, seeing him become thin and weak, forbade him the bed of wood, the hair shirt, and abstinence, to prevent him from exhausting his strength, as so many other fathers did at that time.

If Father Balthasar was zealous in mortifying his flesh and his senses, he was no less so in contradicting his own will, a proof of his experience in spirituality. In fact, the object of exterior mortification, is to bring the body under the dominion of reason; but there is much more to be done to lead a truly spiritual life; for that end, we must subject reason also, to the holy will of God, which is done by interior mortification. Yes, it is this which must destroy whatever prevents a man from becoming truly spiritual, must secure his advancement in all virtues, and establish him in perfect conformity with the will of God, which is the highest degree of perfection. God gave him great

lights on this subject, as is proved by the following extract from his journal, where he speaks of himself in the third person: "He understood clearly that Almighty God does not approve of our occupying our minds with worldly things, to which the will easily becomes attached. God wills that we should become spiritual men. Now to become such, instead of following what our own will suggests, we must on the contrary embrace what is repugnant to it; instead of being stopped in our course by earthly things, we must, by their means, ascend to the powerful hand of their Creator. When a potter intends to make some vessel, he breaks, kneads, and turns over and over again the clay which he is going to use, until it becomes soft. Thus our Divine Master, Whose wisdom is so admirable in His operations, moulds and breaks our will, until it no longer offers any resistance to His holy will." Thus does the Spirit of God act in those souls which He wishes to make perfect; for it is only to such that the above extract applies. As for ordinary souls, He does not mould them with so much care: and the potter also, when he designs to make a rude and common kind of vessel, takes much less pains in preparing the clay.

After being thus enlightened, Father Balthasar applied himself more diligently than ever, to the mortification of his will. He not only thwarted it to make it do good, or prevent it from doing evil; but he persecuted it even in his good works, when they hindered him from applying to what was

more excellent. Instead of sacrificing, as formerly, the service of his neighbour to his relish for prayer, which arose from self-love, more eager for its own repose and consolation than for the execution of the Divine will; he joyfully embraced all privations for the good of others, being sure thus to do what was more pleasing to God. One day, when he was meditating on that passage where the Apostle speaks of the enmity of so many to the cross of Jesus Christ, (Philip. iii. 18,) he said to his good Master, "I protest, O Lord, that from this moment I will seek my satisfaction, not in my enjoyments, but in my sacrifices; not in the accomplishment of my desires, but in the renunciation of all that is pleasing to me; not in health, the conveniences of life, or even in the increase of my spiritual riches, but solely in the execution of Thy Divine will. The more Thou multipliest my privations, the less doubt shall I feel of Thy love. I wish to dry up the tears of Thy apostle, by behaving as a friend of Thy cross. No, I repeat it, my consolation shall no longer be to do what pleases me, but what Thou Thyself pleasest. I prefer to omit prayer, rather than devote to it time, which would be abstracted from the accomplishment of Thy Divine will." Thus did this generous soul show himself prepared to renounce his consolations, and his spiritual delights, whenever it should be necessary, to please God. With equal generosity he mortified his judgment, by sacrificing his opinions, and his heart, by repressing

all affection for creatures, that could in the least cool the fervour of his love for Jesus Christ. One of the fathers, who was intimate with him, related, that having for several days noticed him to be more than usually pensive, as if he were in want of something, or suffering, asked him the cause. "I am endeavouring," answered Father Balthasar, "to work in myself so complete a detachment, that I may live here as I should live in the deserts of Africa, depending as little on things or persons, as I should do in a state of complete isolation." He attained this object, as we shall see later, but only by mortification, both interior and exterior. This virtue in him was so active, that he seemed never to cease persecuting himself. It was so exacting, that he pitilessly refused himself all that nature could desire, even in the smallest things. A man who aims at perfection, used he to say, should mortify himself in all things, in imitation of the Spouse of the Canticles, whose hands distilled the purest myrrh. "Manus meæ stillaverunt myrrham." (Cant. v. 5.) And, added he, when he has once reached this complete mortification, he may say that "all is finished." "Consummatum est." (St. John xix. 30.) He will have destroyed all obstacles to the Divine will, and nothing will any longer oppose his progress in sanctity.

In these words he described his own happy state; for by means of continual and universal mortification, he had succeeded in destroying whatever could hinder his progress, in overcoming

his passions, in acquiring great liberty of spirit, in a word, in gaining so complete an empire over himself, that he was no longer subject to disquiet or ill-humour. Never was he more calm, than when it was necessary to reprove or correct others. Instead of troubling him as formerly, his passions were an assistance to him in fulfilling this duty, according to his own avowal; and he considered it a miracle of the grace of God. Owing also to his perfect mortification, his whole exterior was most religious and edifying, and there was a kind of odour of sanctity about him, which all who approached him were sensible of. Levity and dissipation could not hold their ground in his presence. Every one seemed naturally to become composed and recollected before him. His modesty was so great, and it exercised so much influence over hearts, that he might have said with holy Job: "Lux vultus mei non cadebat in terram." (xxix. 24.) His countenance was that of a penitent, mindful of the presence of God. His eyes were constantly moistened with tears. Never did he lose his gravity: but instead of being burdensome, it was agreeable to every one, because it had nothing of melancholy about it, even when he had great reason to be sad. Several of his brethren have testified, that his appearance was no less edifying than his discourse, so that if their fervour required reanimating, it was sufficient to seek his company. He allowed himself nothing that could cause him to blush, nothing that was in the slightest degree unbecoming the gravity of

a superior, so completely was he master of his movements and passions, an undeniable proof of his perfect mortification.

Finally, as he had nothing so much at heart, as to live united to God, by constant love and familiarity with His Divine Majesty, we may easily infer the ardour of his zeal, in renouncing and mortifying himself in all things. Nothing, indeed, is painful to love. Charity, the Holy Ghost has said, is strong as death, its zeal is as invincible as hell. "Fortis est ut mors dilectio, dura sicut infernus æmulatio." (Cant. viii. 6.) All that hinders its union with God, must give way and disappear. To reach its end, it gives all, it suffers all, it is ready for every sacrifice. "Witness," said Father Balthasar, "the example of Sichem who was enamoured with Dina. He said to her father and her brethren: 'Let me be pleasing in your sight, and I am ready for every sacrifice. Make what claims you please, tell me what gifts will be agreeable to you. Provided you give me this girl in marriage I agree to every condition.' Dina's brethren having required that he should submit to the painful rite of circumcision, this prince was circumcised with all his people. See the power of profane love; shall Divine love be less powerful and less generous? No, certainly. He who, in earnest, desires to be united with God, is ready to give Him for this end whatever He may require, esteeming that so precious an alliance cannot be purchased too dearly. And as God requires for this a spiritual circumcision,

that is, the mortification of all his passions, and of self-love with all its desires, he begins by generously submitting to His will. In consequence, he retrenches all superfluities in the use of the faculties of his soul, and of his exterior senses, looking upon this as nothing, compared with the delightful union to which he aspires. He also feels himself greatly honoured, by acquiring in this state of absolute self-denial and abnegation, a new feature of resemblance to Jesus Christ, His apostles, and His disciples. One day, as he was meditating on these words of St. John: "There stood by the cross the mother of Jesus, and her sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen," (St. John xix. 25,) God gave him the thought that this was an exceedingly great honour for them, which the Holy Ghost enabled them to appreciate, consequently they drew as near as possible to the cross. Thus, he said to himself, Jesus Christ is nailed to the cross, His mother and the holy women, who represent the just, are near him, but His mother being the most holy, is the nearest. Sinners alone are at a distance from this cross, so that to them may justly be applied these words of the Psalmist: "Longe a peccatoribus salus." "Salvation is far from sinners." Now, as I wish to be saved, I will approach as near as I can to the cross by mortification.

CHAPTER V.

BALTHASAR MAKES THE THREE RELIGIOUS VOWS, WHICH HE OBSERVED AFTERWARDS WITH PERFECT FIDELITY.

After the two years' noviceship prescribed in the Society, the novices are admitted to the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and though they are not solemn vows, yet those who have made them are truly religious men, as Pope Gregory XIII. has defined and declared. Balthasar made them at Abula, in 1557, with as much consolation as fervour, and on this occasion, offered himself to God unreservedly and for ever; but as perfection does not consist in promises, but in their fulfilment, we shall see with what fidelity this Religious executed those he made. The reader can imagine it beforehand, after witnessing his perfect mortification. For, in the opinion of St. Thomas, the end of the three religious vows, is to remove the three chief obstacles to evangelical perfection, the love of sensual pleasures, honours, and riches, or as St. John calls them, the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is not enough to renounce exterior things; to destroy these obstacles, we must tear them from our hearts, and plant there the virtues of chastity,

poverty, and obedience, which can only be done by great mortification. Let us examine how Father Balthasar practised these exalted virtues.

1.—HIS CHASTITY.

There are, according to St. Bonaventure, three degrees, by which perfection in this angelical virtue is attained. The first is, an inviolable resolution never to offend God mortally or venially in this way, but at once to resist the temptations that attack us, either by the flesh or the senses. The second is, a subjection of the flesh to the spirit which renders the assaults rare, and the victory easy to those who do not wish to be conquered. The third supposes so complete an empire over the contrary passion, that the revolts of the senses are scarcely perceived, whence arises so great a contempt for these things, that they awake no desire in the inferior part of the soul, so that when necessary they are spoken of or heard with as much coldness, as if they were mud or stones. This last degree can only be the fruit of a special grace, but God grants it to some privileged souls, and Balthasar was happy enough to be of the number.

Must we then conclude that he did not merit much by this virtue? It would be a great mistake. The grace of which I speak, was not granted him from his childhood, and he had to watch and fight before he obtained it. A bold and shameless young woman meeting him one day in

the country, dared to solicit him to sin, as did the wife of Potiphar the chaste Joseph on a similar occasion. He had at once recourse to prayer, and gained our Lord's favour so far, as to obtain not only what he asked, preservation from sin, but also what he did not ask, the conversion of this sinner. Feeling himself divinely strengthened, he spoke to her in so moving a manner, that, bursting into tears, she resolved to confess and change her life. Instead of priding himself on this brilliant conquest, he became all the more cautious, taking every possible precaution to preserve the precious treasure of chastity, and avoiding the least occasion that could endanger it. "I am constantly in fear on this point," he used to say, "and certainly not without reason; for I hold it as a certain truth, that a man in danger of losing his purity, is in greater peril than if he were suspended from the top of a tower by a slight cord." Our Lord increased his fear, by the knowledge He gave him of human misery, and of his own frailty. "Behold," He said to him one day in prayer, "the weakness of creatures!" and he saw it as a most frightful abyss, the aspect of which horrified him, and made him say: "O Balthasar, how canst thou be surprised at the faults of others, and not take every possible precaution to avoid them?"

From this time he became more prudent than ever. If a woman wished to speak to him alone out of the holy tribunal, he refused to hear her. If he was obliged to visit any one through charity,

his companion was required to sit by him. Those pious women of whom he had the direction, he dreaded more than others: "Because," he said, "spiritual love is apt to pass its limits, and easily becomes carnal if we are not on our guard. Does not the best wine make the strongest vinegar?" added he, the better to explain his thought. "Now, this change works imperceptibly. At first nothing is spoken of but what regards God, but very soon, in these intimate communications, nature slips in, their wills insensibly draw near to each other, and in the end contract so strong an alliance that it seems inseparable. Is it necessary to keep at a distance from God, in order to continue this affectionate intercourse? They resolve to do it, but not without some difficulty; nevertheless, they forsake their good Master, for fear of causing mutual offence, for they believe that in acting otherwise, they would fail to observe the laws of that friendship which unites them. Then the devil comes in, increases the flame, throws a veil over their eyes, and ends by making them fall into the snare he has laid for them." Not content with avoiding external occasions, this wise father always kept himself on his guard, neglecting no precaution to avoid being surprised by this dangerous enemy. Even when he was alone, he allowed himself no posture, no movement which did not correspond with the strictest modesty. He was especially careful in practising it on rising and going to bed. He consulted it in choosing the best positions for escaping the machinations of

the tempter. "The method of lying down to rest," he said sometimes to his novices, "is not a trifling matter. A Religious should be so by night as well as by day, therfore his exterior should be always modest. If the desire of mortification is not entirely absent from his heart, he will cheerfully endure the excess of heat, or the inconvenience of an uncomfortable position. If the heat of the summer makes him disregard decency, how will he preserve it when he shall be attacked by fever? Now, indeed, he is alone, but in that case his brethren would visit him, and their presence would make it more serious. Modesty is well worth the trouble to which we put ourselves for her sake, and when in health, we must prepare ourselves to practise it in sickness."

2.—HIS POVERTY.

This holy virtue was always extremely dear to him, as he had nothing so much at heart as to imitate, in all things, the life of Jesus Christ. Besides, he was convinced that evangelical poverty is in religion a substantial virtue, and he used to say, on this subject: "Let us be careful not to be deceived, in judging of ourselves from symptoms which cannot be relied on. The characteristic mark of a good Religious is not found in pious sentiments, nor in lights, nor in spiritual consolations, but in the satisfaction with which he swallows the bitter cup of holy poverty. He ought, then, to have an affection for this virtue, and it

would be well for him to examine his interior dispositions on this point. Besides, this examen is not difficult; a heart certainly loves poverty when it loves its companions, I mean, hunger, thirst, cold, privations, and contempt. If it be not so, the love of poverty is only a delusion. He is not a true lover of poverty who runs to food when he is hungry, or to water when he is thirsty, as eagerly as animals do in the same circumstances. He does not truly love poverty, who is ashamed to wear ill-made, coarse, or old clothes. He does not love poverty, who cannot bear to be in want of anything. And if, after this, he wishes to be considered a good Religious, he deceives himself strangely." Such was the servant of God's idea of the practice of poverty. In accordance with it, he chose for himself the least agreeable food, the oldest garments, and the most inconvenient room. It was even remarked, that in celebrating the holy sacrifice, he took the poorest vestments, and some one having asked him the reason, he replied, that vanity and curiosity might easily seek gratification in a contrary choice.

Far from dreading privations, even in necessaries, he sincerely loved and desired them, and he never asked for anything. And further, he often refused gifts from wealthy persons, in order to feel the privations of poverty, as well as to preserve his liberty, which those cannot always do who are eager for presents. It is true, that as St. Jerome has remarked, secular persons seem hurt by the refusal of their gifts, but in their

hearts they cannot avoid greatly esteeming those who act thus, and praising their love of poverty. Never would this pious father wear a new habit. He would only take it after another Religious had worn it for a certain time. If new shoes were given him, he cleverly passed them on to one of his brethren, and took them back when they had lost their new appearance. Instead of asking for blank paper to write down his important exhortations, he wrote them on the covers of letters, to practise holy poverty. Some one having one day asked him why he did not keep a Concordance in his room? "I prefer," he replied, "to take a few steps to the library, when I wish to refer to it; it is another sacrifice made to poverty." He had no other seat than a stool, and when any distinguished personage came to see him, he offered it to him, playfully saying, "This is a very poor throne for your occupation, who have at home so many magnificent seats, but, as you are aware, that you are in the house of the poor, you will kindly excuse it." The poverty of his room edified his visitors much more than abundant and comfortable furniture would have done. While he was at Métine, a chair, covered with silk, having been sent to him as an alms, he accepted it, saying he would give it the most honourable place in the house, thereupon he carried it to the kitchen, where it remained until it was worn out; his intention in this was to teach the novices, who were sent by turns to help the cook, that religious customs should be quite opposed to those of the world, and

that what is there esteemed, is, in fact, only worthy of contempt. He had a kind of horror of valuable things, even though they might be holy, such as beautiful pictures, carved reliquaries, and choice rosaries. He gave, as a reason, that the hearts of religious persons are too much attached to these things, and they feel a difficulty in parting with them when the superior thinks it proper. Consequently, he refused all such presents, and if it was objected that he might give them away to his Religious, he replied, that they, like himself, ought to seek their consolation in God alone.

He sometimes said to them, "They who, out of love for poverty, voluntarily deprive themselves of what is agreeable, soon experience the truth of those words of the Royal Prophet: 'My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God, and I was delighted.' 'Renuit consolari anima mea, memor, fui Dei, et delectatus sum.' On the contrary, they who seek their own ease have nothing which leads them to think of God, and choose His delightful consolations. The love of God and confidence in His providence," he added, "make up sufficiently for the privations of poverty. Nothing is wanting to a man that loves God; I do not mean by this, he possesses wealth, but in reality he does not want it; for if he have no wish for anything contained in the shops of merchants, everything sold by them is to him a superfluity. If you love God in reality, your heart becomes detached from all things else; and hungering after Him alone, you can feel only contempt for the

bonds of this world; but do not on this account fear that you will want what is necessary. Could this good Father refuse a piece of bread or a garment to him who seeks after Him alone? 'Seek first,' He says, 'the kingdom of God and His justice, and all the rest shall be added to you.' 'Quærite primum regnum Dei, et justitiam ejus, et hoc omnia adjicientur vobis.' He who knows the Heart of God, His wisdom and His power, has no solicitude of this kind. Since He requires hearts detached from earthly things, and intent on His service alone, He will, without doubt, provide for their temporal wants. Let us limit our desires to His fear and His love. The prophet has said, 'Nothing is wanting to them that fear Him.' 'Non est inopia timentibus eum.'" (Ps. xxxiii. 10.)

3.—HIS OBEDIENCE.

Full of esteem for this great virtue, he used to say, that it is the direct road to God; that in this blessed path, there can be no doubt or uncertainty; that it is a certain guide in all cases where sin does not manifestly appear; that religious persons may, with all confidence, follow the direction of their superiors, and leave to them the care of their souls, well convinced that it is God who guides them when they obey authority. "Some one may object," he would say, "that it may happen that he who commands, possesses less ability and experience than those who obey? Far from denying it, I confess that it frequently hap-

pens; but what argument is that against obedience? The safety of this way is derived neither from the wisdom, goodness, nor prudence of superiors, but solely from the order and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the same manner as His presence in the Blessed Eucharist depends on His institution, not on the holiness and virtue of the priests who consecrate."

"When His love," he would continue, "led you into religion, He knew very well, that you would occasionally meet with superiors of little virtue and experience, nevertheless, He wished you to be submissive to them for His love. This can never be in any way injurious to you, for He knows how to make use of their ignorance for your spiritual profit, which depends on the efficacy He has been pleased to give to obedience. When, therefore, a Religious is not equally obedient to all his superiors, whoever they may be, his obedience is to be suspected, as would be the faith of that person, who would venerate a crucifix of gold, but not a wooden one, for the object of his adoration, Jesus Christ, is the same in one as in the other." Hence he drew the conclusion, that obedience is one of the greatest blessings of the religious life, as it is from obedience that the highest virtues proceed. "For this reason," he said, "when a soul begins to understand the government of God, she esteems nothing so much as obedience, through which she receives so much honour, and so many spiritual blessings, and which she feels to be the means of her progress in perfection.

She says then, to herself, with as much joy as the Royal Prophet, 'The Lord rules me, and nothing shall be wanting to me. He hath placed me in a place of pastures, He hath brought me up on the waters of refreshment.' (Ps. xxii. 1.) Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi deerit; in loco pascuæ ibi me collocavit; super aquam refectionis educavit me."

With so high an idea of obedience, an idea which he had conceived in the beginning of his noviciate, it is no wonder that this virtue was always so dear to him, and was practised by him so perfectly. After the example of the ancient fathers, he was seen to leave a letter half formed to go whither obedience called him, saying that it would be great rudeness not to answer the call of God immediately. During the different terms of his office as superior, he was always the first to arrive at the place to which all were summoned, for the ordinary actions of obedience. When he was travelling, no one could be more submissive than he, to the superior of the college where he happened to be. Thus, for instance, when he wished to celebrate mass in another church instead of that of the college where he was staying, he asked this permission of the father rector, who thought it proper to refuse him. Balthasar retired at once, without insisting further, and said Mass in the church of the house. He used to say, "That those who live under obedience may enjoy, if they wish, a great privilege not possessed by people in the world, that of having no solicitude, either

about what they should do, or the time and manner of doing it. It may very often happen that a religious person is troubled with thoughts of this kind, but he has at hand an easy remedy; he has only to say to himself, 'What is the use of all these idle thoughts? What comfort would it be to know what God intends to do with thee in future, or why trouble thyself about the food and clothing necessary for thy body? Has not God undertaken these cares in calling thee to His service? Do not lose the advantages of thy happy position. Do thy duty, and the divine goodness will take care of the rest.'"

The following reflections on this subject were found in his journal: "When the family of Tobias manifested their astonishment that the Angel Raphael should condescend to render them the lowest services, he made them this answer: 'When I was with you I was with you by the will of God.' 'Cum essem vobiscum, per voluntatem Dei eram.' (Tob. xii. 18.) I conclude from these words, that there are no low employments in the house of God; and am I not too happy that this good Master deigns to make use of me in the most abject occupations? If He should even employ me in making bricks, I should still say that I did not deserve this honour; for it is one to render Him the smallest service. On this account obedience is so dear to me, that there is no office so base in the eyes of the flesh, that I am not ready to undertake, were it even necessary to sacrifice all consolation. When a master engages

a servant, he contracts the obligation of recognizing his services. Can there be any honour better adapted to satisfy a soul than the use God makes of her services, and the obligation He contracts towards her? Obedience," he adds, "gives a value to all our works. To prepare vegetables, or wash dishes, by the order of superiors, is a much more noble employment than to preach when God does not send us: and there is more merit in remaining hidden through obedience, than in doing great things through our own will."

"A Religious," he said, "ought not to be anxious about what he shall do to-morrow. If the Devil should address this question to me, the answer is easy. I shall do what I am told. My duty is to please and satisfy God; if that be my object, I am assuredly a faithful servant. "Command, O Lord," he exclaimed, "what Thou willest. Dispose of me as Thou pleasest; inflict any kind of torture on my body; all is the same to me that comes from Thy holy will. Should it be required of me to please Thee, to spend my life in traversing the world, I am ready at once to depart, and to pursue my course without ceasing." I will here remark that travelling was the thing to which he had the most repugnance, both on account of the weakness of his constitution, and his fear of losing his recollection. Nevertheless, he set off when his superiors required it, without remark, and regardless of his repugnances. Changes of place or office found him equally submissive,

and gave him heartfelt pleasure when they caused him to go a step lower. Thus, for instance, when he was transferred from the rectorship of Salamanca to that of the little town of Villa Garcia, he went joyfully to his new abode, desiring to spend there the rest of his days. "A religious man," he said on this occasion, "should be always satisfied with the destination of obedience, and should meditate, as he goes to it, on the words of the angel to St. Joseph: 'Go into Egypt, and remain there until I shall tell thee.' Fuge in Ægyptum, et esto ibi usquedum dicam tibi."

He never became discouraged in the difficult undertakings entrusted to him by obedience; though he believed himself destitute of the necessary talents to ensure success. "A religious man," he said, "placed by the hand of God may count upon His assistance, and may be sure that his employment will be advantageous to him. If He gives him a load that is beyond his strength, He takes it upon Himself, for He is obliged to supply for the incapacity of His servant. Should He, for instance, command an ignorant man to teach, He puts Himself under the necessity of instructing him. Should He employ in preaching a man who does not know how to speak, He obliges Himself to inspire him with what he ought to say to his hearers. For this reason, O Lord, far from fearing that Thou mayest impose upon me some duty that is beyond my strength, I desire it, on the contrary, that I may have Thee for the

companion of my labours. Therefore, if my superior command me to go into the pulpit to preach to a numerous auditory without preparation, I shall quietly obey, in the certain confidence that Thou wilt assist me, in the manner best pleasing to Thee." When a Religious is promoted by his superior to a difficult office, he may object his incapacity, saying that he has not the self-possession, the learning, prudence, or any other quality necessary; but if the superior insist, he must obey without uneasiness, God will do for him what He has done for so many others. Had Saul and David what was requisite for guiding a great nation? or Josue for filling the place of Moses, Joseph for fulfilling the trust of Pharaoh, the prophets for accomplishing their important mission, and the apostles for converting the world? No, certainly; but He who sent them furnished them with the means of succeeding in their undertakings."

"He who obeys," continued he, "may be tranquil in the midst of dangers; there is no safeguard more certain than obedience. Insomuch that a religious man, sent in pursuit of abandoned women, to gain them to Jesus Christ, and going solely through obedience, would have none but chaste thoughts, as if he were an angel of God; but remaining in his room through his own will, his mind may perhaps be assaulted by the most impure ideas. In fact," he said, "I cannot think how any one can believe himself safe in refusing to do the will of God. What safety can there be

where God is not? 'Without Him,' says St. Bernard, 'hope for no good; with Him fear no evil.'" It had often happened to him to think at the first glance, that the reverse of what he was commanded would be the most expedient; but in the execution he had no difficulty in perceiving that the judgment of his superiors was better than his own. Enlightened by this experience, he considered obedience the counsel and the dispensation of God. Hence he concluded that a judgment which does not yield to authority is a mistaken judgment. "When a subject," he said, "cannot easily perceive the wisdom of the order given him by his superior, these words of the Apostle may be cited to him: 'The just man lives by faith.' Justus ex fide vivit." (Rom. i. 17.) He may be told also that an order which is not understood is a mystery of faith, that renders obedience much more meritorious.

His Provincial gave him great pleasure one day, by telling him his own sentiments with regard to this noble virtue, so dear to our pious father. "When the Father-General sends me on my rounds with precise orders to carry out, it seems as if heaven opened to me, and my heart bounds with joy; but when he tells me to consider what it will be best to do, this latitude causes me great anxiety."

Our holy father in his works of obedience, seemed to feel the hand of God putting him in motion and directing him, which made him quite easy about the consequences. He had some re-

markable sayings on this point, which I must not withhold from my readers. "I can only belong to Thee, O Lord, by ceasing entirely to belong to myself. Our Lord has bound Himself by oath to make him increase who is faithful in obedience. Is it not of the obedient Abraham that it is said in the Book of Ecclesiastes: 'No one has been like him in glory; he has faithfully kept the law of the Most High. Therefore God has bound Himself by oath to multiply his posterity like the sand on the earth'? (Eccl. xliv.) What do we risk when we sacrifice our consolations, and embrace the cross for the sake of obedience? This generosity can have no other effect, than to increase our merit. Obedience is a continual cross; it is a sword that immolates our natural satisfactions; it is a mine of gold, a fountain of life; it is not then a small thing to be perfect in obedience, nor a trifling evil to practise it negligently. As a religious man has nothing else to do from morning till night, either his merit is great, or his loss immense. God Himself is the superior of obedient souls. O let Thy voice, my God, sound in my ears. I love the accents of obedience, they make my heart abound in consolation." Such were the sentiments of the father on this great virtue. We shall, however, have to return to them when we speak of his conformity to the will of God.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS ELEVATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD—HIS FERVOUR IN CELEBRATING MASS, AND RECITING THE DIVINE OFFICE.

The Superiors of young Balthasar, seeing the progress he had made in virtue, and his qualifications for labouring in the salvation of souls, caused him to be promoted to the priesthood, as soon as he had completed his studies. From that time his fervour was unbounded, and Almighty God admitted him to the most intimate familiarity. Profoundly penetrated with the importance of his duties, he performed them with admirable fervour. It was most edifying to see how carefully he recited his office. I do not think it possible to fulfil this obligation more perfectly. Notwithstanding the number of his occupations, he divided the seven canonical hours, and recited them as deliberately, and with as much tranquillity as if he had nothing else to do. He chose a solitary place to be more recollected, and he was never seen to perform this duty walking in the corridors, nor in public places, where exterior objects might distract him. He usually fulfilled this pious duty kneeling in the middle of his room. When his infirmities obliged him to sit, he did so, but used a mere stool without any

support, and sat with his head uncovered, knowing well that outward reverence is a great help to devotion. In order to stir it up more effectually, he often said to himself: "The angels should be my models, as I do on earth what the blessed do in heaven. Now, how do they behave in the presence of God? With what dispositions do they celebrate His praises? with great purity of conscience and profound respect. What a disgrace it would be to me, if, destitute as I am of their angelica purity, I should not at least imitate their deep reverence!"

He did not like to perform this duty in common, because he wished to take what time he pleased in reciting it, to relish better the sentiments God gave him, and because he disliked that others should witness his consolations and delights. But it was easy to judge of the lights God gave him in this holy exercise, from the frequent use made by him of the Psalms in his exhortations, and by the depth of meaning which he discovered, in these invaluable songs of praise. This proceeded from his attention to every word, and his care in considering and studying it. From the beginning to the end of his office, he never lost this actual and devout attention. It would be difficult, for instance, to describe the devotion with which he made the sign of the cross, and pronounced the names of the Three Adorable Persons. God granted him grace to feel that They blessed him, when he named Them with so deep a feeling of love.

His fervour was still more admirable in the celebration of the holy mysteries, for which he made the most careful preparation. First, he neglected nothing to bring thither great purity of conscience, examining himself several times a day, and confessing frequently the faults he believed he had committed. He never failed to devote a certain time to recollection, before he went to the altar. No occupation, no hindrance prevented him from offering daily this august sacrifice; it was his pious custom even when travelling, though for this he was obliged sometimes to go without food, to expose himself to great inconvenience, and even occasionally to great dangers, as had happened to him in traversing the heretical provinces of France, in going from Spain to Rome, or from Rome to Spain. He said mass with so much tranquillity and devotion, that those present were greatly edified. One of our Religious told me, that he owed his joining the Society, to the edification the pious father had given him, in officiating during one Holy Week. "Though I was then a secular," he said to me, "I was so touched with his modesty and piety, that I resolved to leave the world, and enter an Order which knew how to form such servants of God." Another person enlightened from heaven, (St. Teresa), assisting one day at his mass, saw a diadem of remarkable splendour on his head, during the whole time, a certain sign of the fervour with which he was offering the holy Sacrifice. When Almighty God favoured him with

extraordinary devotion, which frequently happened, he retired to a domestic chapel, where there was no beholder but his server, in order to enjoy more at length the sweetness of the Divine visit. In his necessities and temptations, in complicated and difficult affairs, his great resource was the holy Mass, in which he found the instruction, light and consolation which he needed. It was rumoured among the Religious of the province, that the angel-guardians of the souls whom he directed, appeared to him sometimes at the altar, to reveal to him their defects, and point out the remedies. One of the fathers who was very intimate with him, having one day asked him if it were true, the holy man blushed, and made no reply. His silence was justly considered to be an answer in the affirmative, for if it had not been so, there is not the slightest doubt that his humility would have made him at once deny it.

St. Teresa shared the common belief in this matter, as we shall see in the eleventh chapter of this work. For my part, I see nothing very surprising in it; for, if, according to the general opinion of doctors, the angels are present at this august Sacrifice, what joy must they not feel in seeing it so worthily celebrated? This explains their familiarity with this excellent priest. They loved him for his lively faith and tender piety, and as love is communicative, they conversed with him and enlightened him regarding things, which, for the glory of God, he desired to know. We see in his journal that he had a particular devotion to

the angels, and especially for the one who assisted him at the holy altar: had not this devotion, then, its origin in the communications of which I speak?

After the holy Sacrifice, the pious father continued for half an hour in profound recollection, thanking God for this great benefit, with all the devotion in his power. It was at that time principally, that God communicated to him His secrets, and bestowed upon him great spiritual lights. I will here cite some examples taken from his journal.

"To day, (the feast of the Epiphany) after celebrating holy Mass, remembering the happiness of the Magi at the feet of the infant Jesus, I desired to enjoy the same fervour, when the voice of God made me this interior answer: 'The Magi adored Him out of themselves, but thou bearest Him in thy heart.' I then perceived that my happiness, and that of other priests who offer the holy Sacrifice, is superior to that of the Magi, consequently I have nothing to envy them." Almighty God wishing to make known to him the reasons, that keep men at a distance from the holy table and the altar, gave him this interior light: "It is surprising that there should be any rich, powerful, or learned men that seek God. Yes, it is truly wonderful and astonishing. If you ask Me why, I answer, because it is necessary that the idols fixed up in their hearts should be overturned, before they can worthily receive the holy ark. When I say the idols must be laid low, I mean

that honour must fall in the noble, pleasures in the rich, and pride in the learned.' Now these are things they love, and rather than sacrifice them, they prefer to bid adieu to the Ark of God, like the Philistines, who said: 'Let not the Ark of the Lord remain longer in our land, for it is a source of misfortunes to us.'" If, then, we behold the powerful, rich, and learned absenting themselves from the Ark of the New Law, which is the Holy Eucharist, or receiving it with so little profit, the reason is evident; they wish to keep the idol of Dagon on the altar of their heart, that is, they will not sacrifice the creature, of which they make their idol. However, if this idol be not overthrown, if the sword of mortification do not cut off its head, hands, and feet, so that it can no longer speak, think, and act in its ordinary manner, the Ark of God will not work in these hearts, the wonderful deeds of its mercy; on the contrary, it will punish them by abandoning them to aridity, darkness, and hardness of heart, until they amend or give up Communion. For, this sacrament works differently in those who receive it, according to the diversity of dispositions. It hardens some, and softens others, as the sun melts wax and hardens mud.

Again, our Lord gave His devout servant the following light: "If the life of the soul is extended to the body to which it is united, so that all the members share therein, even to the least, as the nails and the hair; how much more is the life of Jesus Christ communicated to the souls that

receive Him at the eucharistic table? Is not this what He desired us to understand by these words: 'As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me.' 'Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem; et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me.' (St. John, vi. 58.) The soul may then say, on quitting the holy table: 'Thy life, O Lord, will suffice for us both, as well as Thy sanctity, Thy power, and Thy riches. If a little leaven changes the taste of the whole mass, and makes it ferment, what change canst Thou not work in a heart that receives Thee and gives itself to Thee. Nevertheless, there are souls that communicate without relish, and without softening the hardness of their hearts, but it is their own fault. God does not suffice them; instead of being satisfied with so precious a gift, they cast a longing glance after tears and tender affections, they forget their divine guest, and are taken up with themselves; now, God will never satisfy their desires. He who is not contented with the highest gifts, is unworthy to receive a lesser. If these deluded souls reply, that in desiring tenderness and tears, their intention is to be more pleasing to God, He will answer them, that it is great ignorance to wish to please God otherwise than as He wills; that the best thing to be done in such a case, is to arm oneself with patience, and leave to God the ways and means. When God comes to a soul, He does not leave behind in heaven, or in the tabernacle, His riches

and power, His sweetness and consolations; He does not come with His hands empty, but filled with graces. Whoever possesses Him, possesses all things along with Him. Is it not then clear, that the safest and shortest way of obtaining the possession of all goods, is to desire Him alone, without thinking of anything else? Enter on this path, and you will soon say with the Royal Prophet: 'He hath filled the empty and satisfied the hungry.'" (Ps. cvi. 9.) This holy man received many other lights which I shall not now mention, but speak of them more appropriately later. I will only add now, some admonitions which may be very useful to priests, and to all communicants in general. Well convinced that all might, if they pleased, enjoy the wonderful favours and spiritual delights, with which God loaded him in his thanksgivings, he exhorted them not to lose such great blessings. "I seem," he said to them, "to hear Jesus Christ giving you the warning He gave one day to His apostles: 'You will not have Me always with you. Me autem non semper habebitis.' (St. John, xii. 8.) Yes, this is what He says to each of you after communion. It is only necessary to understand the meaning of these words, which is, 'I am actually present in the midst of your heart, and I am come to give you the opportunity of carrying on with Me a holy and useful commerce. But, as you know, I shall not always remain with you. My presence is attached to the subsistence of the sacramental species. In a few moments they will be destroyed, and I shall

then retire. Profit, then, of this short visit, to negotiate with Me, and enrich yourselves with the blessings I wish to heap upon you.'" The servant of God added these few words to this touching exhortation: "He who communicates, should endeavour to lose none of that precious time, when the Divine Majesty dwells within him. I will show you how it may be spent holily. First of all, we must reflect on the presence of God, and adore Him with the deepest possible respect. Then we must acknowledge ourselves unworthy to behold His divine face, and humbly ask His blessing; we must then listen attentively to the interior voice by which He deigns to speak to the soul, to profit by the lights He gives, and to follow His counsels. There are two defects in particular against which communicants should be on their guard; too short thanksgivings, and too much reading or meditation. Those who are guilty of the first fault, are very blind to their own interest, not to speak of their ingratitude and rudeness. God comes to visit them with His hands full of graces, and they leave Him to run after their pleasures or business. Can we conceive such folly? Every one who has a true love for his soul, instead of shortening his thanksgiving after communion, prolongs it as much as he can, according to the counsel of Ecclesiasticus, xiv. 16: 'Lose not the benefit of the good day, nor any part of the blessing God gives thee.' 'Non defrauderis à die bono, et particula boni non te prætereat.'

"The second defect, though less hateful, is no

less injurious. Reading, meditations, and long prayers, have doubtless their utility, but they are misplaced during the time devoted to thanksgiving. These exercises, in fact, are supplications that we send forth to God, to beg Him to come into our hearts; now is it the time to call upon Him, and entreat Him, when we are actually in the enjoyment of His presence? Besides, what can books or meditations teach us, that is not taught much better by Jesus Christ Himself present? What sweetness and consolation can such means procure, that we do not find much more abundantly in communion? If the reading of good books be a help to holiness, certainly, familiarity with the thrice Holy God is a much more efficacious aid. Reading raises up our heart towards Him, but our pious affections, such as we should have in our thanksgiving, draw down His towards us. He speaks to us in books, we speak to Him in holy prayer.

"O Lord, he is very sick who is fatigued by Thy visits; that soul is very near a fall, that does not find her joy and satisfaction in thee. Where, in fact, shall she find it, if God does not suffice to satisfy her? Where shall she find the zeal and devotedness Thou meritest, if Thy loving visit cannot inspire her with these virtues? Thou honourest her by descending into her house, and Thou comest to bestow on her all sorts of goods; what ought not to be her gratitude? But if Thy conversation be burdensome to her, if she leave

Thee to run elsewhere, it is clear that her heart is fixed upon something different from Thee."

Thus did this servant of God endeavour to induce priests and laymen, to profit better by the presence of Jesus Christ in their hearts, after mass or communion. May his exhortations reach the hearts of all, who neglect or misemploy so culpably the holy exercise of thanksgiving.

This holy man also gave proof of his tender devotion to this august sacrament in this way, that when he was before it, nothing was capable of distracting him. His eyes were so fixed on the tabernacle, that one would have said, he saw Jesus Christ visibly present. Let us try to explain this mystery. The apostles, who were present at the Ascension of their dear Master, followed Him with their eyes, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. They saw Him no longer, yet they still looked after Him, and seemed still to see Him, so strongly was His image imprinted on their minds, by contemplating Him. Our holy father was also often favoured with the light of contemplation, and the impression it left behind was so deep, that he still seemed to see his God notwithstanding the veil of the Sacrament. Need we then be astonished, if he could not turn away his eyes from the holy tabernacle? Through his lively faith and tender love, he made frequent visits to his beloved Saviour, remaining several hours in prayer at His feet, and sometimes whole nights. He would have desired never to leave Him, to make amends for the solitude in which His chil-

dren leave Him, to their shame, and the injury of their spiritual interests. In his opinion, one of the greatest favours granted to religious persons, is to possess in their houses this Adorable Sacrament, which enables them to visit It at any hour by day or night, which cannot be done by secular persons. We read in his journal, that one morning, after visiting, according to custom, all the rooms of the college where he was rector, to satisfy himself that the Religious were employed in prayer, he returned to his own apartment, filled with consolation, and for this reason. As he passed before the church in which Jesus Christ was present, it occurred to him that his college resembled the cenacle where the apostles were all met together, when their risen Master came to console them by His visit. The doors were shut, as the Gospel remarks, which did not, however, prevent Him from entering, and He said to them: "Peace be to you." "Well," said the pious rector, "I see here precisely the same miracle. The doors of the house are shut, and the disciples within, and Jesus Christ present in His tabernacle, in the midst of them, grants them peace, uniting them all in the sweet bond of charity." His devotion towards the Blessed Eucharist was greatly increased, by his intimacy with persons of eminent sanctity, of whom we shall speak hereafter, and who had a special attraction towards this Sacrament. That may be explained in some degree naturally, as it is the custom of friends to communicate their pleasures to each other. We have

every day a proof of this in human friendship. If one has something particularly good in the way of food, he does not fail to ask his friend to partake of it with him, and spiritual friends follow the same instincts, if I may so speak. Was not this the thought of St. John in the Apocalypse, where he says: "If the Holy Ghost, or the Church, His Spouse, inspires you with an important truth, or a useful counsel, let him who hears say to his friend, 'Come and share this light with me.' 'Et qui audit, dicat: Veni.'" (Apoc. xxii. 17.)

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER BALTHASAR BEGINS TO LABOUR FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.—GOD TEACHES HIM HOW TO EXERCISE HIS ZEAL, AND MAKE HIMSELF OF USE TO OTHERS, WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO HIS OWN PERFECTION.

The Society having but few labourers at its commencement, and seeing an immense field before it, ceased not to implore the Master of the harvest, to give it members, capable of labouring therein with fruit. Desires so ardent and so pure could not be ineffectual. Able and zealous workmen were granted it, and among them Father Balthasar Alvarez. He quickly gave proofs of his zeal; for scarcely was he raised to the dignity of the priesthood, than he began to labour for the

salvation of souls. His first ministry was that of confessor, which he fulfilled with as much wisdom as success. No small merit at his age, when we consider, moreover, that this care for others was in no way injurious to his own perfection. The confessional is not without its dangers for young priests, who usually give themselves up to this work of zeal so completely, as to forget their own interests. How many may say of their commencement what the Spouse in the Canticle said of his: "They placed me in the vineyard to take care of the vines, and I have neglected my own." "Posuerunt me custodem in vineis, vineam meam non custodivi." (Cant. i. 2.) Let us see how this is done. Too great solicitude for the souls entrusted to them, distracts them from the attention due to themselves, dissipates their mind, and dries up their heart: then pride comes in, if their work be successful, and the wind of presumption and vanity carries them away. Should it not succeed, they fall into sadness or pusillanimity, or become impatient and disgusted. This is not the case with confessors, who have long laboured at their own perfection; they do not meet with the same dangers in this useful ministry. And was it not to teach us this truth, that Jesus Christ, Who possessed all wisdom from the first moment of His existence, waited until the age of thirty years before He laboured in the salvation of souls?

But in this happy beginning of the Society, the grace of vocation was so full, and the fervour so

great, that it supplied for the number of years. Then, as in the Primitive Church, and the beginning of other religious Orders, even novices were seen, employed by God Himself in the work of converting sinners, and fulfilling perfectly this difficult and important ministry. This was the case with Father Balthasar, as soon as his studies were completed. His fervour rendering him fit for all kinds of work, it pleased God to employ him as an instrument in the great affair of the salvation of mankind, and for this He gave him zeal, prudence and ability. But what was most admirable in him, was, that he occupied himself with others, without forgetting himself; that in this employment, he lost nothing of what he had acquired, and it did not hinder in the least his progress in perfection. I will say further: God made use of this ministry, to communicate to him a greater degree of spiritual wisdom, by three wonderful and hidden means, which Divine Providence usually employs for this purpose. I think it may be of use to point them out.

In the first place, Almighty God so disposed events, that in all the places to which Balthasar was sent, he had the charge of confessing, or directing some persons of eminent sanctity, and sublime prayer. Now in these cases, the confessor and penitent render each other mutual assistance. The confessor assists the penitent by his lights and his guidance, and the penitent in his turn edifies his director by the fervour of his example, like the two seraphs of whom the Prophet Isaias

speaks, who excited each other to celebrate the praises of the Most High, and to sing a canticle in His honour; and like the four mysterious animals which the Prophet Ezechiel saw striking each other with their wings, to rouse their animation, and give greater rapidity to their flight. These comparisons appear to me just: for the words of a fervent and holy master are like flames, which enlighten the mind, and inflame the heart of a fervent disciple, and his example resembles a fire which increases the ardour of the master so much that there is between them a reciprocity of services. Now, as Father Balthasar had the direction of several persons of eminent sanctity, as will be hereafter related, no doubt their example greatly assisted his progress in prayer, in humility, mortification, and other virtues witnessed in him.

And further, when persons of this description give an account of their souls to their director, and manifest to him the interior workings of the Holy Ghost within them, it is a new instruction for him. He notices every ray of Divine grace, and sees with admiration the varied paths, by which God leads souls to the perfection He requires from them. These pure hearts are to him a book, wherein he can read the mystical science written by the Holy Ghost, in the souls of His elect. Finally, as these souls are sometimes very simple, and consequently liable to be imposed on by the Devil, the director is obliged to study the doctrine of the saints, to take care that the Devil

deceives neither them nor himself. In both these ways, Father Balthasar profited greatly from the direction of some very enlightened persons, and in particular, from the illustrious Saint Teresa. "Her intellect," said he to Father Ribera, who wrote the saint's life, "was of so high an order, and her prayer so excellent, that I was obliged to read for her guidance the best spiritual books, and to have recourse to God with all the fervour I was capable of, to obtain the necessary lights for such direction." He obtained what he sought for, as was proved later by the penetration he showed in the discernment of spirits: insomuch that in him were literally fulfilled the words of Ecclesiasticus: "The wise man will go in search of the wisdom of the ancients; and will study the prophets. He will lay up in his heart the instructions of men of authority, and will seek out what is most hidden in parables. From the break of day he will give his heart to the God that made him, and will offer his prayers to the Most High. If the Lord should fill him with the spirit of understanding, the words of wisdom will fall from his lips like the rain from the clouds of heaven." (Eccl. xxxix. 1.)

After this second path, God conducts the directors of souls into a third, in which He perfects them. When kings provide nurses for their children, they are careful that none but delicate nourishment be given them, that their milk may be excellent: and the King of Heaven gives to the foster-fathers of His children, whatever is best and

most delicate in spiritual food, that they may yield the delicious milk of doctrine, perfumed by their good example. This is, it seems to me, what the apostle wished to express, when he said: "If God console us, it is that we may console you: if He enlighten us, it is to give us the means of instructing you." "Sive consolamur pro vestra consolatione, sive exhortamur pro vestra exhortatione." (2 Cor. i. 6.) Now, as God destined Father Balthasar to nourish souls very dear to Him, He prevented him with the blessings of His sweetness, giving him the opportunity of knowing by experience those virtues, which he was one day to plant in their hearts. He raised him to a high degree of contemplation, that he might know how to guide in that path these chosen souls. This design of God is clearly shown in the grace He bestowed upon him, of uniting together the contemplative, and active life. In the beginning, it is true, he felt a repugnance to occupy himself about his neighbour, as he preferred the exercises of the contemplative life; but he was not long in perceiving that God wished him to unite the two, as he felt more devout and recollected, in the midst of the occupations allotted by obedience, than in solitude. By this he understood, that this is the path of apostolic men, and he wrote in consequence in his journal as follows: "Those who are sent by obedience to the assistance of their neighbour, and do not leave their confidence behind them, receive greater light, and find greater help to their devo-

tion, than if they had remained in solitude. Was not this the thought of the Royal Prophet: "Those who go down to the sea in ships, and work amidst the great waters; they have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the depths of the abyss." "Qui descendunt mare in navibus, facientes operationem in aquis multis; ipsi viderunt opera Domini, et mirabilia ejus in profundo." (Ps. cvi. 23-24.)

This holy man was indebted to prayer for so many graces. The great consolations with which God favoured him at that time, urged him to labour zealously for the salvation of others; and the means He suggested to him, of uniting with this labour the care of his own perfection, preserved him from delusions. He had a high opinion and singular esteem of his apostolical vocation; regarding it as an extraordinary favour, that he had been called to a ministry so pleasing to God. In fact, this was made known to him on two occasions, which I will mention.

Having one day completed an important work, he saw, during his prayer the day following, Jesus Christ loaded with precious gifts, oppressed as it were by His burden, seeking to be relieved from it, and appearing disposed to reward any one who should do Him this service. But, notwithstanding His desire, He could not be dispossessed of these riches, because He found no one who would receive them. Father Balthasar, reflecting on this vision, saw in it a proof of the satisfaction, the work he had accomplished had given to

Almighty God. He also understood, that services of charity are the surest means of obtaining heavenly favours; finally, he had no doubt that the intention of our Lord in this apparition, was to encourage him to persevere in this ministry, and to communicate to others the zeal that animated him.

Soon after, he was made sensible, by an extraordinary operation of grace, that practical charity towards our neighbour, is a very sacred duty, a great proof of love for God, of obedience to His Divine commands, and a happy sign, that the instrument is very pleasing to God. It was made known to him also, that those who are not deaf to the voice of our Lord willingly fulfil all the offices of charity, through obedience, convinced that their works have God for their object, as they are done for His love. This consideration makes them feel so much sweetness in serving their neighbour, that they cheerfully bear all the fatigue and annoyance they meet with, yield like soft wax to all that is required of them, willingly pardon those who offend them, and never show towards them any change of manners or of countenance. They know well that God will treat them as they have treated others; with sweetness and mercy, if they have been good and merciful, with generosity, if they have been generous to their brethren. Such is, in effect, the teaching of faith, borne out by experience. "Give, and it shall be given to you; a good measure and heaped up, and overflowing, shall they give into your bosom. For with the same

measure you give to others, it shall be measured to you again." (St. Luke vi. 38.) "Date et dabitur vobis; mensuram bonam, et confertam et coagitatam et super-effluentem dabunt in sinum vestrum. Eadem quippe mensurâ quâ mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis." This is the reason why the friends of God regard the wants of their neighbour as mines of gold that enrich them. Need we then wonder that they labour at works of charity with so much zeal and patience?

It is not uncommon to find among apostolic workmen a temporary exhibition of zeal; but it is not so with persevering and constant zeal, because the perils and difficulties encountered in their ministry have too often the effect of discouraging them. Almighty God, wishing Balthasar to be superior to this melancholy inconstancy, made known to him from the beginning, the advantage that may be derived from these perils and difficulties. This was by means of those words of Psalm cvi. that I have already quoted: "Those who labour amidst the great waters, have seen the works of the Lord." The holy man, in meditating on these words, perceived at once, that apostolic labourers, who embark on this ocean, must expect storms, and he found a confirmation of this in the following verse: "Its waves have risen; they mount up to heaven, and descend into the depths." "Exaltati sunt fluctus ejus. Ascendunt usque ad cœlos et descendunt usque ad abyssos." (25-26.) "No matter," he said to himself, "if God allows these tempests, it is not that His

workmen may perish, but that they may cry out to Him at the sight of danger, and that their faith may be perfected. 'They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He assisted them.' 'Clamaverunt ad Dominum cum tribularentur; et de necessitatibus eorum eduxit eos.'" (Ps. cvi. 28.) He greatly relished this teaching of the great St. Bernard: "It is better to labour for our neighbour's salvation, even if we commit some faults in doing so, than to escape them by applying solely to our own perfection." Virtue, he used to say, that has not been tried by contact with our neighbour, cannot be great. It is amidst combats and temptations that charity triumphs, patience and humility are confirmed, and purity shines in all its brightness. Now, where are these precious trials to be found, but in our relations with others?

These relations not being, however, through human weakness, free from danger, God was pleased to fortify His servant against the fear of yielding, by making him fix his eyes on the help He gives in such cases, and inspiring him with lively confidence in His merciful providence. The admirable lights given him in these matters in prayer, were so numerous and so varied, that they will be mentioned in almost every chapter of this Life. For the present I will mention one instance only, which will show the confidence with which he undertook all that God required of him. "How foolish it is in you," he said, "to hope to succeed in an affair, which God does not entrust

to you; and how foolish also to think that another will fail in an undertaking of which God confides to him the execution, because the means seem to you disproportioned to the object in view. When we see from a distance, a man shooting at a mark, it appears as if the arrows did not go to the object; but when we are nearer, we see that he aimed well. So it is with the counsels of God: His choice of means may sometimes astonish our ignorance: but it is no less true that they are excellently adapted to attain the end proposed, because He can do whatever He pleases."

Notwithstanding the dangers to which his ministry exposed him, fear was not at all habitual to him. Prayer, like another tower of David, furnished him with all sorts of weapons for attack and defence, that is, to make war on all vices without being wounded himself. From the height to which prayer raised him, perceiving the snares laid by the Devil in his path, he took his measures, and rendered them useless. There in secret, he consulted God regarding his employments among men, entreating Him to bless his intentions, and to direct him in those delicate affairs which were in truth His own. There, as in a Divine wine-cellar, he drank deep draughts of that generous wine, which formerly transformed the Apostles, and so inflamed them, that they spoke with tongues of fire. This was the reason why his exhortations, and even his letters, had so much power over hearts: at his voice sinners were converted, the tepid renewed their fervour,

and the fervent became still more so. And this ministry, imposed on him by obedience, helped much towards his advancement; it was a spiritual bread that nourished and strengthened his soul, according to those words of our Saviour: "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work:" "Meus cibus est, ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me, ut perficiam opus ejus." (St. John iv. 34.) Now what was this work, but the salvation of men? He was therefore himself benefited by all that he did to save them. This made St. Gregory say, that the food of the just is the conversion of sinners. Whenever the eagle, hovering in the air, perceives a dead body, he pounces upon it eagerly, to satisfy his hunger. Thus, the just man, animated with holy zeal, runs wherever he sees an opportunity of labouring for the conversion of sinners, that he may feed on that nourishment which is so pleasing to God, and so profitable to himself.

A zeal so ardent might be carried to extremes, and deal with others too freely and incautiously; but God preserved him from this fault, by making him sensible, that great virtue is required to exercise this ministry with safety. The following words show his opinion on this point. "If a priest be not solidly virtuous, what risk does he not run of becoming frivolous, seeing, as he does, so many follies; of being defiled by listening to so many shameful sins; of losing himself in effect by constantly conversing with lost men? It is not easy to watch at the same time, over our-

selves and over others, to treat so many pestilential diseases without being infected. Moreover, a true apostolic labourer ought to find nourishment in the poison that kills sensual men. 'Priests,' said Almighty God by the mouth of the Prophet Osee, 'shall feed upon the sins of My people.' 'Peccata populi mei comedent sacerdotes.' (Osee iv. 8.) Labour for the good of souls exposes, then, to real danger those who are employed in it; therefore St. Denis taught that a priest should possess the following qualifications in order to work with safety. 1. He must be like God. 2. He must not expose himself to danger, but through obedience. 3. He must not enter upon his duties without being well prepared for them. These qualities will not be wanting if he be careful to place himself by prayer under the direction of the Holy Ghost, if he have firm confidence that He who sends him will assist him; and if he believe firmly, that He is too good to allow the duties which He imposes upon him, to be pernicious to him. This does not, however, dispense him from taking proper precautions. Let him then watch carefully over himself; keep his senses under restraint, and never expose himself unnecessarily to dangerous occasions. Falls are the consequence of imprudence; not of obedience to the orders of God. Finally, when his work is finished, I advise him to examine how he has conducted himself, and if he should have committed some imprudences, to impose a pen-

ance on himself, resolving to avoid them in future."

CHAPTER VIII.

PRUDENCE AND SKILL OF FATHER BALTHASAR IN THE DIRECTION OF SOULS—WISE MEANS WHICH HE USUALLY EMPLOYED.

When Jesus Christ sent His disciples to go through the world and labour for the conversion of sinners, He said to them: "Be wise as serpents, and simple as doves." "Estote prudentes sicut serpentes, et simplices sicut columbæ." (St. Matt. x. 16.) These then are two necessary qualifications for evangelical labourers, to procure the salvation of others, without endangering their own perfection; prudence, and simplicity; prudence, in what regards poor sinners, simplicity, in what concerns their own interest. But what sort of prudence and simplicity must it be? Jesus Christ has taught us this by the comparison He makes. They must borrow of the serpent his penetration and dexterity, to make use of it in the choice of means adapted for gaining souls, even having recourse, if necessary, to the cunning of this crafty reptile, in order to fight him with his own weapons. As for the simplicity necessary for their own safety, it is that of the dove, a model of innocence, of pure intention, meekness, and

humility,—precious virtues, which forming as it were an armour, will greatly assist them in gaining hearts.

Such were the qualities manifested by Father Balthasar in his difficult and dangerous ministry. As he was a man of prayer, God enlightened him during that holy exercise, and this Divine light taught him practical methods of uniting these two things so opposite in appearance. One may be regarded as the principle and foundation of all the others; it is this: whenever he was obliged to converse with men, he regarded only God and His glory, and desired nothing but to please Him by his service. Hence it mattered little to him whether his ministry were agreeable or inconvenient, whether his penitents or hearers were nobles or country people, learned or ignorant, rough or cultivated, agreeable or disagreeable. One single thought of faith possessed his mind, and inspired him with equal interest for all; that God, their common Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, led those souls to him by His holy inspiration, that he might take care of them in imitation of his good Master, Who has so well described His charity in these few words: "All that My Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out." "Omne quod dat mihi Pater ad me veniet, et eum qui veniet ad me non ejiciam foras." (St. John vi. 37.) These words had deeply touched Father Balthasar, and from the beginning of his ministry he had made them the rule of his actions; consequently he

laboured for souls only through obedience, received all whom God sent him, had no wish for any others, and did them all the good in his power, with the intention of pleasing God alone. He had no wish to seek anything else, for he feared to incur the reproach of the Prophet Malachy: "Who is there among you that will close the doors, and kindle the fire on My altar for nothing?" "Quis est in vobis qui claudat ostia, et incendat altare meum gratuitò." (i. 10.)

This purity of intention made him equally accessible to all, without partiality. His zeal was as great for the poor as for the rich. His penitents well knew this, and all therefore had confidence in him. "Why does Almighty God," used he sometimes to say, "remind us in the Book of Wisdom, that He has created both little and great, and that He has the same care for all?" "Pusillum et magnum fecit, et æqualiter cura est de omnibus." (vi. 8.) No doubt it is to show us that we are neither to despise the lowly, nor neglect the great. By another effect of this true charity, he perfectly observed the rules of good breeding, being grave and courteous with persons of consequence, and kind to the poor and to children, which gained him the affection of all. To this intention of pleasing God alone, the father owed that influence which he possessed over the great, who are, however, very little before God, whose minister and representative the priest is. The most eminent men, and he was the director of many, were sensible of his spiritual

superiority, and treated him with the greatest deference. His sanctity impressed them to that degree, that they would not have dared to speak in his presence of worldly affairs, or of those which did not relate to God. He was obliged to encourage them by taking the initiative in edifying conversation, so much respect had they for his dignity, and for the Spirit of God that dwelt in him.

To this superiority, of which he knew how to make such excellent use, this worthy priest joined great liberty of action, the result of his disinterestedness and of the purity of his heart. In fact, his love for his penitents had nothing of flesh and blood about it, it was an affection produced by charity, and consequently entirely spiritual; he loved them, not for themselves, but for God, and God alone; no view of interest actuated his zeal, and he not only did not seek, but refused their presents, however earnestly they might entreat him to accept them, for fear of fettering his sacerdotal liberty. Though he loved them sincerely, he was very careful to keep his heart free from all attachment, that he might be ready to leave them whenever obedience required it. He would not allow them to become attached to him either. On this account, whenever he made known to them his departure, or his temporary absence, no one dared to show before him the pain this gave them; he left them entirely at liberty to make their confessions to others, or to consult them on spiritual matters, provided

they chose men who were capable of this office, and that their wish to do this were not the result of inconstancy or curiosity; even more, he absented himself from his confessional from time to time, to give them an opportunity of confessing to other fathers.

If he had given himself up to the ardour of his zeal, he would have worked night and day for the salvation of his neighbour, and would have neglected for his sake, the care of his own perfection; but he was careful not to carry it to so injurious an excess; he knew that when Almighty God introduces His servants into the cellar which contains His precious wines, He begins by regulating their charity, that if the wine of love and zeal inebriate them, prudence may keep them within the bounds of wise discretion. Consequently, he only received under his direction as many souls as he could guide, without neglecting his own; for his design was not to have a great number, but to make those whom God confided to him, advance greatly in perfection. "It would be," said he sometimes, "to misunderstand the spirit of our institute, if we gave ourselves up indiscriminately, to the souls that require our services in all parts. I know no more certain means of secularising the heart, and in consequence, of destroying the religious man within us. No doubt we must work for our neighbour's salvation, but according to rule and measure, that is, with that moderation which unites with it prayer and spiritual progress. A wise workman

uses his tools only for the work that suits them. What would he gain by acting differently? For example, if in the morning, he blunt the edge of his hatchet, it will not do in a day the work that it would otherwise have done in an hour, and this painful and laborious work will after all be a failure."

He was one day asked to define a perfect evangelical labourer: "It is not," he answered, "he who hears a great number of confessions, and at the same time neglects his exercises of piety, but he, who, fulfilling them with exactness, succeeds all the better in making his penitents advance in virtue, though they be few in number." As for himself, he admitted nothing that holy zeal could suggest, for the perfecting of those belonging to him, according to the measure of their grace, for he did not believe that any one was entirely incapable of advancement in virtue. "If all souls," he would say, "are not capable of mental prayer and other interior practices, they may at least, with the help of the graces communicated to them in the sacraments, make progress in the reformation of their morals, the correction of their defects, and the acquisition of true and solid virtues." With this desire for the advancement of his penitents, it is easy to believe that he had no wish to see his confessional besieged by a crowd, nor to give his time to souls, who, content with escaping hell, had no esteem for the evangelical counsels. Persons of this sort, who knew his zeal, and his spirit, would not address them-

selves to him, which he was far from regretting, as he had thereby more opportunity of assisting souls that wished to obtain perfection. God had given him great skill in guiding these souls, and he took the greatest care of them, saying, "That he was no less obliged to sanctify his penitents than to correct their vices, and that he dreaded equally, the account he should have to render to the Sovereign Judge for both." Consequently, he neglected nothing to induce his penitents to humble themselves, to mortify their passions and vicious inclinations; and to assist them in this holy undertaking, he tried them himself, sometimes by saying to them what would wound their self-love, sometimes by prescribing them acts contrary to their will, or making them give up certain things to which they were attached. He had received a gift of so great tact and delicacy, that these proceedings, though very painful, never irritated any one. His penitents, on the contrary, liked him all the better, and convinced of the benefit they derived from him, always returned to him with fresh pleasure. I have said that he did not spare their self-love; I will mention some instances to prove it. He would say to some in a tone of reproof: "It seems to me that you make very little progress, and it surprises me; for if I had done for some others what I have done for you, I have no doubt they would have advanced much more than you." Sometimes he would only say: "Let us not lose the time that others employ so usefully for the

good of their souls." But he said it in such a manner that the penitent felt his heart penetrated with compunction, and disposed to shake off his tepidity. He used the same method, to keep up the fervour of those who advanced the most rapidly, adding some mortifying trials of which experience had taught him the utility. What in fact is prayer, however fervent it may be, without mortification? It is an illusion, a mere blaze, as all masters agree unanimously.

Finally, he recommended all to overcome themselves in those things, for which they felt the strongest repugnance, to diminish the number of their visits, to avoid conversations, or to take a less prominent part in them, to moderate the luxury of their furniture, clothes, and tables, to choose in all things what was most conformable to modesty, humility, and their condition in life. He particularly exhorted them to bear humiliations and contempt in silence, saying they would never find more favourable opportunities of gaining riches for heaven. Lastly, to confirm his wise counsels more strongly, he was himself the first to put them in practice on all occasions in their presence, as will be shown in the description we shall give of his conduct in the different places where he lived.

CHAPTER IX.

FATHER BALTHASAR, BEING SENT TO AVILA, PRODUCES GREAT FRUIT IN THE DIRECTION OF SEVERAL SOULS OF EMINENT SANCTITY.

Besides the general good which Divine Providence has in view in the distribution of His workmen, He does not lose sight of the spiritual necessities of souls that are dear to Him; it even sometimes happens, that the good of such souls is the reason of an apostolic man being sent to a particular place. It seemed, indeed, as if the mission of Father Balthasar to Avila had been arranged by this special providence. Besides the office of minister, which he exercised there for nine years, he confessed a great number of seculars in the church of the college, and found time also to go to see others, to direct them in the way of perfection. It is of this ministry that I am going to speak, because he rendered it most fruitful, especially in some souls, called by God to eminent sanctity.

There was in the town a large community of priests, united under an ecclesiastic of great virtue, named Baza. His design was to send them to give missions in the diocese, but, before all things, he endeavoured to form them to the virtues of so holy a state. He did not require to be long

acquainted with Father Balthasar to find out his lights and zeal, and to be convinced of his sanctity. Then, like another John Baptist, he placed his disciples in the father's hands, that he might direct them and communicate to them the virtue and learning required by their ministry. The father, entering into his views, assembled them together as often as possible, and spoke to them of God so fervently, that the emotion he produced in them, lasted several days. He accustomed them to the practice of mortification, and gave them a rule of life arranged with singular wisdom. Lastly, he obliged them to come every week to confess their sins, and give him an account of their exercises of piety. Assisted by these means of sanctification, they became exemplary men, and living proofs of the gift granted to the father, of directing souls in the path of perfection. We will mention a few facts in proof of his skill in this office.

A distinguished nobleman, Augustin Ozono, had made his confession to him in a serious illness; the father, having visited him in his convalescence, spoke to him with so much energy and unction, that he made him resolve to leave the world, and live like a Religious, dividing his time between spiritual exercises and works of mercy. Astonished at this change, this gentleman exclaimed at the sight of the arm chair, in which Father Balthasar had so often sat to enlighten and instruct him: "Ah, if that chair could speak! what touching and sublime things would it not

recall to my mind!" The father greatly contributed to the perfection of Francis Salzedo, whom St. Teresa has so greatly praised in her writings: she named him the Christian cavalier, because he knew how to unite the counsels of the Gospel with the customs of his rank, retrenching in his behaviour whatever the world opposes to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Our good Religious rendered still greater services to Francis Guzman; he was an ecclesiastic possessing many rich benefices, but whose life was that of a secular: he wore the dress and led the life of a worldling, spending his revenues in decorations, furniture, banquets, and equipages, to the great scandal of those who knew him. Almighty God, who had over him designs of mercy, caused him to make the pious father's acquaintance, and scarcely had this skilful physician touched him with his blessed hand, than he was changed into a new man. He resumed the dress of a priest, and renounced his benefices, reserving only a pension of one thousand ducats, the greater part of which he gave to the poor. He kept in his house only a boy to wait upon him, and became as mortified as he had before been addicted to good cheer. All the time unoccupied by his ministry, was employed in works of charity; he devoted himself with special zeal to the care of the sick, rendering them all the services their state required, however repulsive, painful, and humiliating they might be. Having been appointed canon of the cathedral in place of his brother, he changed nothing in his occupations,

he gave more alms than ever, thanks to his new benefice, which was very considerable; nor were poor sick persons the sole objects of his charity; he gave abundantly to monasteries, to all the poor he met with, but especially to the bashful, whom he sought out as eagerly as they endeavoured to conceal their misery. His expenses were so great, that none could understand how his revenues could meet them. One year, particularly, three hundred poor persons, supported by him, formed a case that could not be explained naturally, and it was clear that God wrought miracles in his favour.

Several severe illnesses were sent him to increase his merit and sanctify him yet more. When these trials began, Father Balthasar was no longer in those parts. His superiors had sent him to Métine, and when there, he was told of the sufferings of his beloved disciple. He immediately wrote to him the following letter. "As soon as I heard of the sufferings you are enduring, I began to fear you might not profit by them, as fully as He who sends them to you desires; but, having since been informed of your patience, I have been filled with consolation. Nevertheless, I am told that you are much depressed, and it is to be feared that you may give way to languor. On such occasions as these, a friend should come to the assistance of his friend, therefore I do not hesitate to interrupt my business to give you a helping hand. Open your eyes, Sir, and acknowledge, in the evils that afflict you, the tender love God has for you. Ah! do not doubt it; it is because He

loves you, that He will not leave your faults unpunished, nor your virtues imperfect. It is true that He has kept your soul long on the cross, which has contributed not a little, to mortify your passions and evil inclinations, but that was not sufficient to make you resemble His Divine Son. It was necessary that your body also, should be nailed to the cross, on which this good Master expired. It depends upon you, now, to be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, and I expect it of you with as much joy as confidence. I am going to request the prayers of our fathers and brothers, to obtain from the Divine Goodness, that your sins may be no obstacle to this great grace, and that your health may be restored, to be employed hereafter solely for His glory and according to His good pleasure."

This good priest had an ardent desire to join the Society, but the superiors would never consent to receive him, on account of the great good which he did in the town; this was a painful privation to him, to which he could never entirely reconcile himself. When he felt his end approaching, he expressed a wish to die, where he had not been allowed to live; his prayer was granted, rooms were given him in our college, where he made a holy end, and his remains repose with those of the fathers in the crypt of the church. Before expiring he was heard to cry out, that he was going into eternity with joy, knowing well that he should be admitted into heaven; and St. Teresa

assures us, that she saw his soul carried by angels into the abode of glory.

Father Balthasar directed with equal wisdom many distinguished persons who addressed themselves to him, prescribing to each, rules for his spiritual guidance, in accordance with his state, that they might practise them with fervour and perseverance. Through this discretion, he seldom failed to attain his end; it will be easy to prove this by example. Having required of a man in the world, that he should confess and communicate every Monday; he was so faithful to this advice, that during thirty-four years he never allowed himself to change that day for another, so much did he respect the authority of his confessor. A lady, who had become a widow at the age of nineteen, omitted nothing that could enhance her beauty, which was itself remarkable, and in this she acted through pure vanity. Having taken Father Balthasar for her confessor, he induced her, notwithstanding her great repugnance, to lay aside all worldly pomp, and give herself seriously to the service of God. She had reason to congratulate herself on her obedience, for in reward of her sacrifices, she received the greatest benefits from our Lord. So generous, in fact, is this good Master, that He never fails to exalt to true honours, those who despise themselves for His love, and to pour His heavenly consolations into hearts, detached from affection to earthly goods. He guided by this path of renunciation of delights and inordinate vanity, the women under his direc-

tion. Some quitted him, not being able to resolve on these sacrifices, but the greater number entered into his views, and followed his advice; of this number was a young person named Anne Reyes, whose vain tastes were a great obstacle to her perfection. When he had freed her from her more serious faults, and had gained her confidence, he told her that her refinements in dress were very disagreeable to him, and that he was determined to allow them no longer; that in devotion, the exterior must not be in opposition with interior recollection, but that both should keep pace together: he never again returned to this subject, continuing the work by another method, well known to all his penitents, and which Anne learned at her expense. When anything displeased him in her, he assumed a severe expression, which made her tremble; she then endeavoured to find out what was defective in her exterior, and corrected it as speedily as possible. This severity in the father was of the greatest service to her, for she acquired in a short time a great command over her passions, profound peace and a largeness of heart, which assisted her in attaining a high degree of prayer.

CHAPTER X.

DURING HIS STAY AT AVILA, HE GREATLY ASSISTS MARY DIAZ IN ATTAINING HEROIC VIRTUES.—A CONVERSATION THEY HAD TOGETHER ON FIVE KINDS OF SUFFERING, VERY MERITORIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

The most happy circumstance of his residence at Avila, was his being enabled to render useful assistance to two illustrious women, rivals in perfection, I mean Mary Diaz and St. Teresa. The first edified the town at that time by her eminent sanctity, the remembrance of which was long kept up. Why is it not still existing in the memory of those who dwell there, and why is it not known to all souls that aim at perfection? They would have reason to blush and be confounded at the example of this peasant woman. Is it not humbling to see a girl without learning, or education, raise herself up to heaven in her contemplations, and dwell there habitually by her affections, whilst with perhaps many more helps and graces, we remain buried in the mud of earthly things. This pious girl felt most happy in meeting with such a confessor as Father Balthasar; and the father on his side, profited much from his knowledge of her. It is certain, that the conversation and example of this angelical young woman

increased his fervour, and that the assistance he rendered her, greatly increased his reputation in the Society, and among the inhabitants of the town. But let us hasten to satisfy the reader's curiosity, as he desires no doubt to become acquainted with Mary Diaz.

Mary Diaz belonged to a village near Avila, and from her childhood gave notice by her virtues, of the eminent sanctity to which she was one day to rise. After forty years spent in virginity with her family, she lost her father and mother, and the desire of serving God more perfectly, led her to Avila. Her first step in her new abode, was the distribution of her property to the poor. Afterwards, being already bound by the vow of chastity, she added those of poverty and obedience to her confessor. He, who was a Jesuit, did not approve of this last vow, therefore she supplied for it as far as she could, by abandoning her will entirely to God. That she might live in more profound recollection, she obtained leave from the bishop to live in a cell belonging to the Church of St. Millan, from which she could see the tabernacle; this was to her an unspeakable consolation, as she had a tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Having once fixed her abode in this solitary cell, she no longer left it except to go to Confession and Communion in the Church of the Jesuits' College. This isolation from creatures, and continual presence of the Sacrament of Love which she called her neighbour, made her advance rapidly in spirituality; she received such a gift of

prayer, that she astonished the ablest theologians, by the depth and exactness with which she spoke of the mysteries of faith.

About this time, Father Balthasar having arrived at Avila, Divine Providence sent him this soul, of which he took the charge the more willingly, as he saw that she was singularly favoured by God. He applied himself first to become acquainted with her defects and imperfections, in order to labour at their correction; he then neglected nothing to establish her solidly in humility, obedience, resignation and patience, losing no opportunity of mortifying her. When she asked for him at the confessional, he made her wait whole hours, or he would tell her to come the last, though she had been there long before the other penitents; instead of answering her questions mildly, he gave her dry and disagreeable answers. Sometimes, after she had waited long, he sent her away without hearing her, and having allowed her three Communions a week, he sometimes retrenched one, sometimes two, without telling her the reason. This plan of conduct, which might offend sensitive persons, was nevertheless full of wisdom; for, before a soul can live to God, she must die to herself, and to make her die, she must be mortified. Now, ordinary mortifications do not affect truly pious souls, because they are detached from all things here below; their consolations and pleasures are wholly spiritual. They must then be tried in those things, that their submission to the will of God may be unreserved,

and that they may depend on Him alone. He had ordered her to go to other confessors, when he was not able to hear her, that she might not lose the great blessing of Communion. One day, however, changing his mind, he went to her in the church, and told her he would hear her confession, before she approached the holy table. The next day was her Communion day, she went early to the confessional, and let him know she was waiting; he would not go, however, until he was told that four others had arrived, and even then he made her allow them to go first. Other penitents came successively; they were heard before her, and the dinner hour struck before all were dismissed, so that the poor girl was put off until the next day. When that came, the father managed things so that she did not succeed better, and he kept her thus twenty days in succession, deprived of Confession and Communion. These privations undoubtedly made her lose many graces, but her losses were more than compensated by her pious desires, by the fervour of her preparations, and especially by so long an exercise of truly heroic mortification, which disposed her to receive these two Sacraments afterwards more frequently and with greater fruit. I do not know whether this pious girl understood the father's design, but she submitted to these painful delays, without murmur or complaint.

One day she took a fancy to go to the church leaning on a stick, as if she had wished to appear a person of importance. The father seeing her,

went straight up to her, and asked her what that meant. "No doubt you wish," he said, "to deceive those who see you, making them believe you are a great lady; truly, your pride has reached its height. Go and put your sceptre in the square. You will return in the manner befitting a poor girl like you." She instantly obeyed, and went to the father, who refused her Communion as a penance for her thoughtlessness, but she humbled herself so profoundly, and begged his pardon so earnestly, that he was touched, and allowed her to go to Communion.

About this time she began to be persecuted by devils. One day, when their attack had been more than ordinarily terrible, she felt so great a dread of them, that she took a little child into her cell to sleep, that its presence might make her feel more safe during the night. Father Balthasar having come to see her one morning, was much surprised to see a crib with a child asleep; he desired to know the meaning of it, and when she told him, he reproved her sharply for what he called cowardice. "What," said he, "at your age to be so destitute of courage! after all our Lord has done for you, are you not ashamed to be wanting in the confidence you owe Him!" At these words, Mary took up the cradle, and carried the child back to its mother. It must be acknowledged that the reprimand was just, for souls of this degree of virtue ought not to be so much afraid of the devil, knowing that without God's permission he cannot hurt them. They should not place

their confidence in creatures, but in the protection of the Creator, under which they will be in safety.

The father, having heard that she went out occasionally, to visit some ladies in the town, told her, that instead of losing her time thus, she ought to employ it with God. That was sufficient to determine her to leave her room no more. This change did not please the ladies who were deprived of her society, and as they easily guessed the cause, they came to see her, and complained bitterly of her confessor. Mary could not deny the fact, and, wishing to excuse the father, as much as possible, told them in her simplicity that he had rather recommended recollection to her, than forbidden her to make visits. However, she kept firm to her purpose of making them no more. The more the father mortified her, the more she liked him, perfectly understanding the spiritual benefit she derived from his guidance. She therefore constantly adhered to it, even in his absence. "How happy am I," she often said, "to have met with such a guide! What wisdom and sanctity I find in him! Alas! we shall be very far separated in paradise. Where, in fact, can God place me, but near the door, with the children that have died immediately after baptism? It will not be so with this excellent father, whose eminent sanctity is preparing him a high place in that happy abode." Then, alluding to his custom of mortifying her, she added, smiling: "I foresee one thing, that is, when the

father in passing, sees me in so low a place, he will not fail to say to me as usual, 'Stay there, then, lazy and cowardly child, as you would not rise higher.'" Blinded by her humility, she little knew the opinion the father had of her; though on every occasion he humbled and mortified her, he at the same time considered her a soul of high sanctity; and he soon allowed her daily Communion. God's judgment of her was no less favourable, as we may conclude, by the great favours He granted her. Often, in assisting at Mass, from her tribune, she saw in the Host a Child of exquisite beauty, and in the chalice red Blood, the heat of which was manifested by a light smoke. When the priest divided the Host she still saw the Child, whole and entire in each particle. Where could this ignorant girl have learned such sound theology, if the visions granted her had not been really Divine? I think I may here make known an instruction derived from this pious girl, well adapted to edify my readers. When I was in my noviceship, Father Balthasar, in exhorting us one day to the love of sufferings, the great advantages of which he was enumerating, gave us an account of a conversation he had had with Mary Diaz on this subject. She spoke of five kinds of suffering, not merited, and therefore highly advantageous to those, who knew how to endure them with resignation, and conformity to God's will. If my memory do not deceive me, she spoke of them to the father as follows.

First kind.—Cold and heat, dry and wet, tem-

pests, storms, winds, earthquakes and other events, which should cause only joy in those who love the Divine Will. Regarding this, the father told us that during one very severe winter, Mary, almost destitute of clothing and in a cell as cold as ice, suffered so much that she could not help complaining before the Blessed Sacrament. "What," answered our Lord, "it is I who do this, and you dare to complain of it!" "By these words," said the father, "He evidently meant her to understand that it is enough that these evils come from the hand of God, to induce us to bear them without complaint, according to the Royal Prophet, 'I was silent and opened not my mouth, because it is Thou that hast done it.'" (Ps. xxxviii. 10.)

Second kind.—Corporal discomforts, from whatever source they spring: that is, either from a superfluity of humours, as sickness, pains, melancholy, sadness, weariness and disgust, or the necessities to which we are all subject, as hunger and thirst, sleeplessness, fatigue, the privations of poverty, and a thousand similar things. Now, she added, we ought to bear all this quietly, because these inconveniences are allowed by Divine Providence, either to punish our faults, exercise our virtue, or for other ends that we do not know, but which must be most wise.

Third kind.—Characters unlike or opposed to our own: for instance, when we have to live, or transact business with choleric or phlegmatic persons, or with those whose pride is easily wounded.

In this point, masters have much to suffer from their servants, and servants from their masters. It is the same with Religious living in community, where many different characters are met together, God so willing it for the exercise of His elect. The father added, that no virtue is perfect, unless it be tried in this manner by our neighbour.

Fourth kind.—The humiliations and contempt we meet with, which are more difficult to bear than bodily sufferings, and therefore of far greater merit in the sight of God.

Fifth kind.—Spiritual troubles, which it is often impossible to remedy, such as aridity, distractions, obscurity, discouragement, scruples, temptations of various kinds, and external persecutions of devils. All these things, she said, come from God, to Whose will we should patiently submit. To this kind belong also the trials, to which confessors and superiors subject those they direct and govern, to prove or perfect their virtue.

These instructions of Mary Diaz were the fruit of her own experience: for God, after inspiring her with an ardent desire of suffering for Him, had not spared her in any of these ways; and on this account the father cited her as an authority.

At the request of one of her confessors, she remained six years in the house of a noble lady, unknown to whom she suffered a cruel persecution, hated by the servants, who, doubtless through jealousy, heaped upon her insults, derision, abusive language, and even ill treatment, and carried their cruelty so far as to refuse her the

food she required. To put an end to these annoyances, one word would have sufficed; but she preferred to keep silence, believing that this ill-treatment was the just punishment of her sins. When she had consecrated herself to God by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, her heart became so dry that she ventured to complain, or rather, to express her surprise to His Divine Majesty. "O my God," she said to Him, "it is when I have just given Thee all that I have, and that I can give Thee, that Thou treatest me thus! Does that seem good in Thy sight?" Nevertheless, instead of consoling her, He allowed the Devil to persecute her terribly. He also added sickness with severe pains. It was clearly proved then, that the complaint of which I have just spoken was not in earnest; for these new trials, instead of appearing excessive, were not enough to satisfy her. Having attained the age of eighty, she begged God to prolong her life, to give her time to suffer more. St. Teresa, telling her one day how ardently she wished for heaven: "As for me," she said, "I wish for it as late as possible; for in this land of exile, I can give something to God, by labouring or suffering for His glory, but in heaven, I should have nothing to give Him. No doubt, it is very sweet to rejoice, but we shall have all eternity for that." These two different desires had each a solid foundation; but that of Mary Diaz was far preferable, because it proceeded more from grace, which can alone inspire the love of

the cross, and hinder the soul from falling under its weight: finally, this pious woman, enriched by her sufferings, and loaded with merits, died at Avila, leaving to those who had known her, the most beautiful example of patience, not to speak of her other virtues.

CHAPTER XI.

FATHER BALTHASAR BECOMES THE DIRECTOR OF ST. TERESA.—REVELATION OF THIS GREAT SAINT CONCERNING HIS PREDESTINATION.

During the same time, lived at Avila, Mother Teresa of Jesus, a Carmelite nun in the monastery of the Incarnation, whose life I am not going to relate, as it is known to every one. Spain, already so honoured by giving birth to St. Ignatius and St. Dominic, derived fresh glory from this illustrious woman, who, at a later period, founded the Order of Barefooted Carmelites. Father Balthasar was far from being a stranger to her heroic virtues: we have the proof of it in her own words. One of her nuns asking her one day, if she would do well to consult this father: "Very well," answered St. Teresa, "and I should regard it as a great mercy of God towards you, if that father would undertake to direct you: I have gained more from my intercourse with him, than from all other directors; and if I have made any

progress in perfection, I owe it to him more than to any one." We see in her works, that she rejoiced to have met with the fathers of the Society of Jesus, which furnished her with two excellent directors. "The first," she said, "did me much good; the second still more: it was he (Father Balthasar) that led me into the path of high and solid perfection, by detaching my heart from creatures, and accustoming me to be content with God alone."

This was, in fact, the first service he rendered to this great soul. His lights and experience made him aware of the injury to souls caused by human attachments. "Particular friendships," he said, "enslave the heart, make it lose the privilege of its liberty and ingenuousness, and render it incapable of familiarity with our Lord; they cause us to occupy ourselves far too much with the person beloved, are a loss of time, banish God from the heart, and prevent us from uniting ourselves to the Supreme Good." Seeing that Teresa had a difficulty in breaking off some friendships, because she thought it would be ungrateful, he undertook to destroy this obstacle to her advancement. He advised her, for this purpose, to recommend the matter seriously to God for several days, saying a "Veni Creator" each time, to obtain the light of God on the subject. Teresa followed this advice, and felt the benefit of it; for she had a vision in which God said to her: "Teresa, I wish you no longer to converse with men, but with angels." From that time she

no longer sought consolation from creatures, and had no friendship but with holy souls, and she was very careful at the same time to avoid all imperfections, and especially those excesses which she had formerly allowed herself. This shows the prudence and skill of this able guide, who, instead of roughly plucking these friendships from her heart, contented himself with leading her into the right path, where God Himself would not fail to perform this difficult task. It is, in fact, the best method of acting for the purification of souls to whom God is accustomed to communicate Himself familiarly.

But the father did not neglect to labour himself at her reformation in many things. He was very careful, for instance, to moderate the eagerness of her desires, that she might become mistress of herself, and firmly established in peace. Thus, having received from her, one day, a letter to which she asked for a speedy answer, as a relief to some trouble that had happened to her, he answered her that very day, but took care to write on the outside that he forbade her to open the answer until thirty days had elapsed. It was a terrible mortification to her; she punctually submitted, however. He tried her still more severely at a period of tribulation and adversity, on the way in which she was led, which was in truth very extraordinary. "All who know you," he said to her, "think you are under a delusion, and I am not very far from thinking the same." He forbade her Communion for twenty days, to see

how she would bear this trial; finally, he exercised her in so many ways, and mortified her so severely, that she was often tempted to leave him, but an interior reproach always prevented her from doing so. She remained therefore as long as God permitted it, under the guidance of this wise master, for whom she felt as much affection as respect.

These sentiments were quite just: for when he was convinced of her being led by a good spirit, both by light from above, by the reading of her works, and perhaps still more by the result of the trials to which he had subjected her, he became her support, her defence, her consolation and refuge amidst the desperate attacks of her enemies. She gives this testimony of him in her writings—let us hear her own words: "My confessor, a very holy Religious of the Society of Jesus, has defended me, I know, on several occasions from my detractors. When he was told that I was deceived by the devil, he answered: 'It is impossible; for I know from experience that she has corrected her faults, and has made great progress in virtue.' This father had no less humility than prudence, and this humility was a great torment to me. Though he was a man of prayer and of profound learning, not wishing, however, to rely on his own judgment, in a way in which he had yet no experience, he had much to suffer as well as myself, from the manner in which I was blamed. He was told one day, and I knew it at the time, that he ran great risk in

believing my words, of being deceived by the devil; and to induce him to abandon me, several examples of confessors deceived by their penitents, were quoted to him. It was truly a work of Providence, that he persevered in hearing my confession and directing me, as he had done up to that time. 'Be careful,' he said to me, 'not to compromise yourself, or to depart from the rules I have prescribed for you. On this condition, I promise to continue to take charge of your soul.' He also ordered me to conceal from him nothing that passed within me, assuring me, that if even I were under the influence of the devil, this candour would prevent him from injuring me, and that God would make his malice favourable to my progress in perfection. He also consoled me, and always told me to keep up my courage. Alarmed by his recommendations, I obeyed him in all things, though very imperfectly. O how much he had to suffer during the three years that I was under his care! In the great persecutions of which I was the object, and in those occasions when God permitted me to be judged unfavourably; though I was often innocent, my detractors blamed him for the defects they reproached me with, and considered him responsible for the illusions, of which they believed me to be the dupe. In vain did he attempt to defend me; they nevertheless continued to assert that I was in danger of being lost, and that it was his duty to prevent it. Besides these troubles, he had also to remove my fears, and maintain the peace of

my soul. Let others judge if I had not reason to fear that he would abandon me; but no, God powerfully assisted him, and his virtue gave him invincible courage. He was eager to console me; telling me that if he had had a little more confidence in his own lights, he might have spared me all this suffering. I think that God enlightened him regarding this affair during the holy sacrifice of the Mass."

These words of St. Teresa make known to us two things which tend to the father's praise. On one hand, his humble prudence, which did not allow him to trust his own opinion in an affair of so much importance; on the other, the solidity of his judgment, which was always favourable towards his holy penitent, when other directors joined in condemning her. In approving of her spirit, and of the way in which she was led, he did only what every one has since done, and the Church herself also.

When the saint undertook to found the monastery of recollection, some contradictions having arisen, the father ordered her to suspend this affair. It seemed even, as if he were inclined to make her give it up. But God, Whose will was different, told him one day, through Teresa herself, to take for the subject of his prayer the next day, these words of the ninety-first Psalm: "Quam magnificata sunt opera tua, Domine! Nimis profundæ factæ sunt cogitationes tuæ." "How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord; Thou alone knowest how to execute them." Father Balthasar,

in meditating on these words, saw that God desired this establishment, and that He would make use of Teresa to accomplish this important work. In consequence, he told her that the foundation of the monastery must be carried on, assisted her himself with all his strength, and helped her to draw up the laws and constitutions by which the whole Order is still governed. It is true that this prudent virgin sought assistance from the lights and experience of several learned and pious Dominicans; but as long as she could have Father Balthasar's assistance, he was her guide and her ordinary adviser. He took great part, for instance, in the foundations she made at Métine-du-Champ and at Salamanca, to which places he was sent in succession as rector. Even in his absence, she did not fail to have recourse to him in her perplexities and doubts, and on his side, he lost no opportunity of assisting her by his letters and his credit. In proof of this, I will cite a fragment of a letter which he wrote her from Salamanca to console her under some affliction. "May Jesus be your light and consolation in your troubles. If I write you these lines, it is more to satisfy you than to fortify your strength, for God usually helps you in the least combats you have to sustain. 'God forbid,' said the holy apostle, 'that I should glory in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And I say, God forbid that I should think, you seek your glory elsewhere than in that cross, whose sweetness you know so well. If God requires the

death of Isaac, that is, of our own satisfaction, He renders us a real service: let Him put the fire and sword into the hand of Abraham, that the sacrifice may be consummated. I have no fear on this point, for I know how pleasing this sacrifice is to souls that love God. I have also remarked that your affairs succeed much better in storms, than in tranquillity. What I advise you under the circumstances is, to hope much, to be silent, and to beg of God that He would make known to you, if what you desire is in accordance with His good pleasure. He alone can manifest to His people what can be brought about by His power, and the sublimity of His counsels. As for me, I will do, here and elsewhere, what depends upon me for your service."

He assisted her, in fact, in all ways, and her Religious also, at Métine, Salamanca, Val d'Olet, and wherever he met with them. It was a real consolation to him, to aid them in their undertakings, and to labour for their sanctification, as he regarded them as burning lamps or torches, which are consumed before the Adorable Sacrament. These services were pleasing to God, as may be remarked in certain events that will be related in due course. At the present moment, I will only speak of a signal grace obtained for him by Teresa, in gratitude for all he did for her and her foundations. It happened that the father was severely assaulted by a temptation regarding his eternal predestination, so that he no longer knew what to think about his salvation. Teresa, being aware of

this terrible trial, had recourse to our Lord to obtain his deliverance, and it was not in vain; scarcely had she finished her prayer than God gave her the assurance that this father would be saved. He also showed her, the high place that he would one day occupy in heaven, and added, that he surpassed in perfection all the holy souls then living. Teresa, full of joy at so favourable a revelation, went to the father, and told him to take courage, for God had just made known to her that his salvation was certain. At the same moment the temptation ceased, and was succeeded by the most consoling hope, which convinced him that the revelation really came from heaven. Shortly after, he had himself a similar one, as we shall see later. I will only point out here, what this revelation made known regarding the virtue of this holy man. By the testimony of the Spirit of God, he then surpassed the most perfect souls that existed in the world at that time. Nevertheless, there were men highly distinguished for virtue, both in the Society, and in other religious orders. Now, if he excelled so much in sanctity at the time we speak of, what would he become later? for he lived several years longer, and never ceased his progress towards his end. Besides, Almighty God does not usually make known these secrets to souls of ordinary virtue, who might be tempted to pride, or fall into tepidity. Therefore, as He granted this grace to Father Balthasar, it is a certain proof that He was sure of his humility, and of his fervent zeal to advance in this noble

career. In fact, he laboured with even more courage for the glory of his Master and the salvation of his neighbour. St. Teresa, greatly comforted by a revelation so honourable to her father, made it known to the Religious of the Society, to her nuns, and to several fathers of the Order of Preachers. To keep it in remembrance, she wrote down the account of it, which was found among her papers after her death, by the first historian of her life, the Bishop of Sarragona. The same prelate relates, that the saint one day told a lady of rank, that in her communications with the father, on the degrees and methods of prayer, she had always found him superior to herself, not only in theory, but also in practice, which is not a little thing to say. We shall ourselves also be enabled soon to show forth the truth of this assertion.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER BALTHASAR IS SENT TO METINE-DU-CHAMP, WHERE HE MAKES HIS GREAT VOWS IN 1567.

The great success of the father at Avila in the work of the sanctification of souls, having brought out his zeal and talents, no less than his sanctity, his superiors sent him to Métine, to exercise there the functions of rector and master of novices. This was in 1566, after the feast of the Epiphany. But before we relate the good he did

to others, it is well to make known two circumstances that concern him personally.

On the first of May, 1567, he was admitted to the profession of the four vows, a high degree in the Society, to which only men of superior learning and virtue are admitted, for an intention that I will explain. There are in the Catholic Church two states of perfection, one composed of those who tend to it, the other of those who have attained it, and have the charge of guiding others. The first is that of Religious, who, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, are not obliged to be perfect, but to labour to become so, by the means laid down in their rule; the second is that of bishops, for whom, to have gained perfection is a duty, as their office obliges them to teach others, but as bishops cannot fulfil all the offices that this employment requires, they are aided by the pastors and ministers of the Church. After this model, St. Ignatius, enlightened from above, has established the various grades of the Society. After the two years noviceship, the subjects admitted make the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which constitute them Religious, and consequently oblige them to aim at perfection, by the use of the means prescribed in the rules and laws peculiar to their order. They remain in this tate during the whole course of their studies, that is, generally for seven years. They then have a third year of probation, entirely devoted to the renovation of their spirits, and the practice of religious virtues; after which, being honoured

with the priesthood, they exercise its functions for a longer or shorter time. Their superiors remark them, notice their talents, their virtues, their prudence and zeal for the salvation of souls, and if in all this, they perceive in them a maturity of virtue and learning, they are admitted to the solemn profession, in which they add to the three ordinary vows, that of going to serve the Church, wherever it may please the Sovereign Pontiff to send them. It is evident, that to contract such an engagement, there must be, with heroic resignation, very perfect virtue, and a great love of God, and our neighbour. For this reason, this profession is not made at any fixed time, and few are admitted to it. The others, good religious men, but inferior to these in virtue and learning, form the class of spiritual coadjutors, charged with helping the first in the functions of the holy ministry, and the offices which it may please superiors to entrust to them.

Father Balthasar having proved himself as eminent in virtue as in learning, and capable, by his prudence, of all the offices in the Society, was admitted, twelve years after his entrance into religion, to this solemn profession, a very honourable distinction, no doubt, since it is the proof of no ordinary merit, but, at the same time, a very responsible one; and it is from this point of view that it is regarded by those who grant it, and by those who are elected to it. Far, indeed, from conferring exemptions and privileges, it binds to a stricter practice of obedience and poverty, deprives of all

chance of dignities, unless imposed by the express order of the Sovereign Pontiff, and requires the acceptance of any mission, however perilous, which it may please him to impose upon them. If, then, there be any true honour in this elevation, it is in fulfilling with exactness these great and difficult obligations. Father Balthasar acquitted himself of them excellently, as will be seen in the course of his life. I cannot, however, pass on, without making some general remarks on his perfection in the fourth vow.

The vocation of the professed of the Society is like that of the apostles, who were not attached to any territory, but went from place to place, preaching the gospel in the countries allotted to them, prolonging their residence where their ministry was most fruitful. At the voice of the Sovereign Pontiff, of the general of the Society, or of the superiors who represent them, they go about giving missions, from place to place, depart to the most distant countries, remain at home to govern the houses, or in colleges to instruct youth, having no object but to procure for Jesus Christ the fruits He asked for, when He said: "I have chosen you and placed you, that you may go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may remain." "Ego elegi vos et posui vos ut eatis, et fructum afferatis; et fructus vester maneat." Isaias seems to have had in view this variety of functions, when he compared evangelical labourers to clouds, that seem to fly, urged on by the wind, and to doves, occupied in building their nests. Our Religious

are in fact clouds, not indeed empty, but full of the water of heavenly doctrine, which, urged on by the power of the Holy Spirit and of obedience, traverse the world, watering the hearts of men, that they may produce fruits of life, that is, the fruits of good works. Some countries are watered by them more abundantly, because they dwell there longer; there are others, through which they merely pass, but not without rendering their ministry useful to some souls at least. The comparison of doves is no less apt; like them they fly to their nests, and deposit their eggs, which they hatch patiently, until the little ones are ready to come forth, for they are birds that quickly multiply. Lovers of solitude, they willingly remain under the roof of their Religious house, where they pray, sigh, meditate on the divine mysteries, and taste the sweetest consolation. They there bring forth spiritual children whom they train with great perfection; they then go to other places whither obedience calls them, to increase the number of the children of God, and recall to Him the wanderers. Such was Father Balthasar's life, more particularly after his solemn profession. Though he had a great inclination for solitude, prayer, and contemplation, he did not fail to labour assiduously for the sanctification of souls, whom, through his watchful care, he led on to high perfection. Our Lord, to multiply the fruits of his ministry, caused him to be sent from one place to another. Thus he was sent from Avila to Métine, from Métine to Rome,

from Rome to Castile, where he held the office of vice-provincial, and from Castile to Arragon as visitor, whence he returned to become the Provincial of Toledo. At this time, it was in agitation, to entrust him with the government of the province of Peru, and he showed himself ready to obey without a word; but this appointment was not made, as God had other designs upon him. To him all employments and places were alike. He even found in these changes, an additional happiness, on account of the acts of submission they caused him to make to the Divine Will. This was quite evident, from the promptitude and appearance of satisfaction, with which he went to his destination. Almighty God said to holy Job, to give him a high idea of His power: "Does the thunderbolt depart when you send it? does it return at your summons, saying, 'we are here?'" "Numquid mittes fulgura et ibunt, et revertentia dicent tibi: Adsumus?" St. Gregory the Great thinks that in this passage, Almighty God had evangelical labourers in view; and in effect, He sends them where He wills, without meeting with any resistance; they return at His call, glorifying Him and rendering Him thanks for the success they have met with; they say to Him: "We are ready to set off again, to go whither it may please Thee." Such was always the conduct of Father Balthasar, as we have seen up to this time, and as will be noticed in the course of his life.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOD GRANTS HIM A GREAT GIFT OF PRAYER AND CONTEMPLATION—HE GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF IT TO HIS GENERAL IN COMPLIANCE WITH OBEDIENCE.

The father had for sixteen years made his prayer in the usual method, which is that of meditation, when it pleased God to raise him to the prayer of contemplation. He received this great favour at the time of his profession, and he began then to receive those wonderful communications, of which they alone can speak, who know them from sweet experience, but of which they are usually silent, unless God oblige them to make them known. This was precisely the case with our pious father. His method of prayer having caused doubts in the minds of some local superiors, they wrote to the general, who, to ascertain the truth, commanded him to give an account of all that took place in his soul. The obedient Religious at once took pen in hand, and candidly disclosed his spiritual state; I will relate what he wrote for the benefit of my readers: "I worked for sixteen years like a labourer, who takes all kinds of pains to render his field fertile, without, however, gathering any harvest from it. It was extremely painful to me, to see myself deprived

of the gifts and talents, which enabled others to advance, and made them pleasing to God. At first I endeavoured to overcome my incapacity, by prolonging my prayer beyond measure, but that only fatigued my mind and dried up my heart; and perceiving the temptation, I resolved to give to this exercise, only the time prescribed by obedience. That at least cured me of the foolish wish, to share in the progress, and in the special favours granted to those among my brethren, who were more worthy than myself. I saw also, that my defects did not humble me so much, as cause me pain, because they seemed to me an obstacle to the designs of God over me. I felt deep sorrow for them. I grieved also for the defects of the souls under my charge; and it seemed to me the duty of a wise director, to require of them to labour with bitterness of heart at their amendment. For fourteen years I was in the habit of presenting myself before God, as a poor man asking alms; but as I was far too much occupied with my own interests, I passed all this time in deep sadness, imagining that I should never attain perfection. At last, I entered into myself, and easily perceived my foolishness. For several days afterwards, my confusion before God was extreme. Shame kept me from raising my eyes. I dared not speak, except to entreat Him to punish and pardon me, and to remedy my miseries. Then He deigned to admit me to a higher kind of prayer, and my penitents profited by it. From that time I felt my heart changed, dilated, dis-

engaged from creatures, and in a state of astonishment, that I can only compare to that of the blessed, when they shall say to God on the day of His justice: 'In beholding Thee, O God, we see all that is good, and we are cured.' In this new state, I received many graces at once; I acquired in the first place, a just appreciation of what is precious, and knowledge to discern what is vile and contemptible: afterwards I discovered easy means to obtain heaven, and I saw myself in an assembly of persons destined for eternal happiness. God gave me a clear knowledge of the truths, which are a delicious nourishment to my soul, which establish her in peace and repose, and cause her to mount up to the heart of God, whence these truths proceed as from their source. These lights are not all permanent; they come and go, but at the present time I receive them more frequently, God be praised for it.

"I have also received greater strength to endure the labours, crosses, and trials, with which it may please the Divine Will to visit me. I have lost the fear I used to feel, of those who were superior to me in sanctity and wisdom, insomuch that I durst not appear before them, seeing myself so destitute of wisdom and learning, and scarcely considering myself as a man; I thought I could not live without the guidance of a saint, and a prudent and skilful man. Now, without ceasing to esteem the persons of whom I speak, or to appreciate the assistance I can receive from them, they seem to be no longer so necessary to me, and it appears more

beneficial to me, to live with God alone, in Whom I find all. I began at the same time to experience a certain interior life, through which I find it easy to direct myself in the smallest things, and to render the same service to the souls under my care. Owing to this interior spirit, I no longer perceive difficulties in those things which formerly caused me anxiety, and I discharge the functions of my ministry with a facility, that my former preparations did not procure for me. Thus I have learned by experience, the wisdom of the advice of St. Peter, 'that we should cast all our care upon God, because He has care of us.' 'Omnem solicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi est cura de vobis.' This experience has also enabled me to assist my neighbour, without going out of myself, so that the works of zeal are no impediment to my peace.

"The government of others has become easy and consoling to me: for it is the property of a will guided by the interior spirit, to remain free, in the midst of the most numerous and important affairs. When I enter into myself, I find there, as it were fixed, the image of the holy humanity of my divine Saviour, not merely in a transitory way, but habitually. The wish to give more time to prayer, no longer causes me anxiety and solicitude, for I have found by experience, that God gives more to a mortified man in one hour of prayer, than to another who is not so, in several hours; and that the occupations imposed on me by obedience, are more profitable to me than reading or repose.

My defects alarm me much less than formerly; instead of being painful, they console me in some degree, because they humble me, showing me what I am of myself, and oblige me to put my confidence in God, by warning me of my own weakness. They appear to me like so many windows of my soul, through which light comes in, and shows me that involuntary faults cannot be an obstacle to perfection; therefore I only occupy myself about them as far as is necessary, to be covered in confusion for them before God, and to renounce myself. The defects of others no longer excite in me any feeling but compassion, and I see clearly that the displeasure they formerly gave me, arose from my impatience; I have therefore resolved to bear with them in my penitents, instead of grieving them and sending them away sorrowful, as I used to do.

"As for my prayer, it is as follows. I place myself respectfully before God, Whose presence is manifested to me interiorly and exteriorly, not in a transitory way, but permanently and habitually, and I rejoice in Him. Such is, I think, the teaching of St. Thomas, where he says: 'That the attention of beginners, proficients, and the perfect, should be chiefly directed to keep themselves united to God, during this exercise,' though with certain differences, which he carefully points out. 'Though the perfect,' he says, 'endeavour to advance in charity, that is not, however, their chief study, they occupy themselves in uniting themselves to God, and enjoying Him; beginners, on the con-

trary, and those who are making progress, but all tending to the same end, are more solicitous, the first to avoid sin, the others to perfect themselves in virtue.' To explain this doctrine, he cites for an example, the motion of a body which departs from one term, draws near another, and at last rests quietly. The same holy Doctor in his little work on Beatitude, speaking of the manner in which the saints enjoy God in heaven, says that we should do the same on earth, and aim at that in all our actions, because this enjoyment of God is our true good. He supports this, by a passage from Isaias, which says that the Son of God was given to us that we might enjoy Him, even during the present life. What more is required to condemn the folly and blindness of those who seek Him with anxiety, are distressed at not finding Him, and cry out to Him in prayer, that He may hear them? They surely forget that they are living temples, wherein dwells the majesty of God, as the apostle teaches. Therefore, they seek at a distance the Sovereign Good Whom they possess, and torment themselves, instead of enjoying Him, which depends upon themselves. It consequently follows, that their works are not as perfect as they might be. 'Though it is true,' adds St. Thomas, 'that he who suffers willingly for God, gives Him thereby a proof of his love, he proves it still better by rejoicing in Him in prayer. It is therefore certain, that union with God, and the enjoyment resulting from it, are common both to the

citizens of heaven and the just who live upon earth.

"It sometimes also happens to me in prayer, to reason according to the intelligence that is given me, either on some words of holy Scripture, or on the instructions that God gives me interiorly, but usually I am silent and at rest. What need have I, in effect, to break silence? Everything in this world speaks to God: all in me is open before His eyes; my heart, my faculties, my powers, my knowledge, my thoughts, my desires, my efforts, and my end. On the other hand, His glances are so powerful that they can correct my defects, inflame my desires, and give wings to my soul. I have no need either to excite my will; for He desires more than myself, the advantage and glory I can gain for Him by my services and my obedience. Besides, as He is my guide in the path which I traverse, what can I do better than follow Him in peace, trusting in the truth of His word? If I do not obtain what I seek and desire, I gain a greater good, that is, the conformity of my will to His good pleasure, and this is the end of my life, and the object which I should never cease striving to attain. Why should I wish to know what He hides from me, to walk in a path which He does not open to me, or to make quicker progress than He desires? 'If,' says the author of the Imitation, 'you come to seek no longer yourself, but Me alone, you will then greatly please Me, and will live in great peace.' Such is my present dis-

position, and I find in it a consolation which leads me to allow Him to treat me as He pleases.

"Since I embraced this method of prayer, I have endeavoured to find authors who approve, and reasons which support it. These authors are mystical theologians: St. Augustine, (ep. 112.); St. Thomas on these words of the Apocalypse: 'Factum est silentium in cœlo quasi media horæ;' St. Gregory, (3rd. Book of Morals, ch. xxvi. and xxxix.); St. Bernard, (serm. 55, on the Canticles); Albert the Great, 'De adhærendo Deo,' (ch. xx.); St. John Climacus, (grad. 27; Eccles. xxxii. 9,) in these words: 'Audi tacens, et pro reverentia accedet tibi bona gratia,' which means, if I mistake not, 'Listen in silence to the teaching of God, and in return for this reverence, He will grant you His favours, His friendship, His familiarity.' It seems to me also, that the Holy Spirit had in view this prayer of repose, when He said in the Canticles: 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, wake not my beloved until she pleases.' 'Adjuro vos filiæ Jerusalem ne suscitatis neque evigilare faciatis dilectam, quoad usque ipsa velit.' The spouse on awaking replies: 'That is the voice of my Beloved.' But how does she recognise it? By its incomparable sweetness: the effects produced in her by this voice, are too delightful to come from any source but God. The sleep in which she is plunged, is a figure of the repose granted to souls, which have taken great pains to find God. 'I have found,' she says, 'Him Whom my soul loveth, I have held

Him and I will not let Him go.' 'Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum, nec dimittam.' She is full of joy, and I can understand it. How could she be sad, when she possesses the source of all joy? Our troubles and sadness proceed, from our seeking those things wherein they abound, while we fly from those which contain life and joy. Thus are we the artisans of our own miseries. Yes, our desires are our executioners.

"Nevertheless, the object of all our desires is happiness and rest. Even worldlings do not seek anything else: they labour in youth, that they may rest in old age, and they pity as unhappy, those who are always labouring and never at rest. In this sense, St. Thomas (work 63) blames those spiritual persons, who spend their whole life in seeking God, instead of enjoying Him, and he asserts, that their exercises are less perfect for that very reason. He who builds a house, no doubt intends to live in it; and he who plants a vine wishes to gather its fruit. 'What shepherd,' asks the apostle, 'is satisfied with pasturing his cows, without drinking their milk?' 'Quis pascit gregem, et de lacte gregis non manducat?' Was it not also in this sense that Jesus said to Jerusalem: 'O if thou hadst known the things that are for thy peace, but they are hidden from thy eyes.' 'Si cognovisses et tu quæ ad pacem tibi; nunc autem abscondita sunt ab oculis tuis?' These words may be very well interpreted in this manner: Thou possessest all that is necessary for happiness; thou needest only to know it

to enjoy peace. What makes the soul uneasy is, the agitation with which she pursues a good she thinks she has not; if she knew she possessed it, certainly she would rest in enjoyment. Take notice of a man, who is seeking another to whom he wishes to speak; even when he has found him, if he do not recognise him, his anxiety continues, because his desire is not accomplished. This was what happened to St. Mary Magdalene at our Lord's resurrection—she sought Him eagerly, and even when she had found Him, was not at rest until she knew that it was He.

"What man would be so foolish, as to prepare food for himself continually, without ever taking it? 'I have seen,' says the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiastes, 'another evil under the sun; a man whom God has loaded with goods, so that nothing is wanting to him, but to whom He has not given the power of eating of them.' It is useful to remark, that there is the same difference between the man who understands this, and him who does not understand it; as between a man who, after labouring painfully to gain his bread, does not eat it, and another who, as soon as he is in possession of it, uses it to appease his hunger: he rests while he is eating, the other continues hungry and uneasy.

"When a soul, after seeking God, has found Him, what can she do better than enjoy His presence? 'Taste,' says the Psalmist, 'and see that the Lord is sweet.' 'Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus.' (Ps. xxxiii.) The

excellence of this path is described in the Book of Wisdom. When the Spirit of Wisdom enters into a soul she becomes so precious, that nothing in nature, however rich, can be compared with her, neither gold, silver, precious stones, or corporal beauty, however remarkable it may be. This Divine Spirit, in giving Himself to her, communicates to her all His qualities; now, He is sweet, full of goodness, wealthy in the possession of all kinds of riches, &c. A soul which knows and feels Him within herself, easily bids adieu to the vain affections which occupied her, and she then begins to be free. So much for the authorities who approve this kind of prayer. Let us now consider the motives that recommend it.

"I. If the mind does not usually reason in this kind of prayer, at least it asks, not 'in actu signato,' but 'in actu exercito,' as theologians say. It does not indeed express its desires in words, but it knows well that they are open before God, Whose holy presence faith reveals to it; now, desires are quite as effectual with God, as words with mortal men. The Royal Prophet says that the Lord has heard the desire of the poor: 'Desiderium pauperum exaudivit Dominus.' It suffices then to desire with faith, that God may see what passes in the soul, and he who follows this way, and renounces his own, may be sure that he will find therein all good.

"II. Whoever thinks thus of God, gives Him greater honour, because the idea he forms to

himself is more sublime, and more conformable to the excellence of His Divine Majesty.

"III. We know that many saints have practised this kind of prayer.

"IV. It is the true method of prolonging this exercise, and of rendering it in some degree continual, which cannot be the case with meditation, as reasoning is fatiguing.

"V. This method causes no injury to the soul. All that she desires to obtain by reasoning for her amendment, she can obtain with much more certainty in the way we speak of. Thus we see that those who follow it, are more attentive to their advancement, more submissive to their superiors, more firm in troubles and disastrous events, more able and skilful in the guidance of others.

"It is, however, true to say that this method is not suited to all. The ordinary method is that laid down by St. Ignatius; but the way of which I speak, should be embraced by those whom God calls to it, and by those who have long exercised themselves in meditation, with the advice of their directors. This doctrine has St. Ignatius for an example; for after following, as a beginner, the path marked out in his Exercises, he entered into the passive state of which I am speaking, as his life informs us. 'Postea erat patiens divina.' If every science has its beginning, middle and end, I may say as much of prayer. Now, no one has any right to interrupt this progress. Directors cannot, with a safe conscience, recall to an active state those whom God calls to repose; they

would endanger by it both their souls and bodies. Osuna, in his alphabet, goes so far as to say, that God will shorten the lives of superiors, who shall thus place themselves in opposition to the Master of souls, unless they cease from this tyranny. I do not mean to speak here, of what they do in this way as a trial, for they then exercise a right which cannot be disputed. This is my opinion, and I may say, my experience, on this subject, but I entreat that it may be for your paternity alone."

This account, given by Father Balthasar to his superior, purely through obedience, throws great light on his eminent virtue. He begins by confessing his illusions and ignorance, before he speaks of the abundance of blessings which he had received from God, that the wonderful change wrought in his soul, may be attributed solely to the liberality of God. If he speaks of his contemplations, it is because that was the point, in which his superiors believed him to be the dupe of the spirit of error. Before he began to write, he made a retreat of fifteen days, and did not send his account to the father general, until it had been seen by a very experienced father, who took a copy which he kept by him a long time; but after the author's death he brought it to light, and by this means it came into my hands. But as it contains instructions of great importance for souls given to prayer, and some might abuse them, by departing from the spirit of the holy father, I will comment upon them in the following chap-

ters, without, however, interrupting the history that I have begun.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MORE DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE PRAYER OF REPOSE OR QUIET—EXAMINATION INTO THE CAUSES THAT MERITED FOR FATHER BALTHASAR THIS PRECIOUS FAVOUR.

The lives of the saints are books useful to all; the riches they contain are offered to all, but they cannot all be used in the same manner. Some things are intended for our imitation, others to be merely admired, and to induce us to glorify the Author of these extraordinary graces. Among those which are practicable, the reader must with prudence, select what suits his attraction, and his degree of advancement in perfection. It is quite certain that the arm of God is not shortened, and that He still grants to His beloved souls, the same graces that He formerly gave to His saints. Spiritual persons who may read this work, can regulate themselves from the instructions and examples they will here meet with, taking into consideration their method and degree of perfection. It is to render this discernment more easy, that I undertake to explain here—1st. The theory of this method of prayer; 2nd. The way which leads to it; 3rd. The obstacles which shut us out

from it; 4th. The fruits to be drawn from it; 5th. The vocation we must have to enter upon it. And I will show these things in the subject of this history.

I. We will begin by explaining the terms made use of by the father, with many others, to denote this kind of prayer. We will speak later of its substance and its circumstances, from another treatise of the same father, written in answer to the objections of his detractors. This subject is not useless; for names express things, with their nature and effects. This prayer is called the prayer of the presence of God, of repose or recollection, and of silence. Many other names are also given to it; but I mention these only as the most general, and those of which I do not speak are contained in them. I say then: 1st. That it is a prayer of the presence of God. No doubt, in order to pray well, either mentally or vocally, it is necessary that he who prays, should, enlightened by faith, firmly believe that God is present and hears his prayer; for no one thinks of conversing with a person, whom he believes to be absent, deaf, or inattentive to what he says. All prayer, then, supposes the presence of God; but the prayer of which I speak, has received this name for a reason peculiar to itself; it is, that in this prayer the soul, illuminated by the Divine light, discovers without any reasoning or difficulty, God present, near her, or within her, insomuch that she seems to see, to hear, and to feel Him. Thus Moses, as the great apostle relates, stood firm

before Pharaoh, because he believed he saw the invisible God present to defend him. From this clear view proceed, as from a natural impulse, deep respect, profound admiration, a feeling of satisfaction and joy, as it happens to a person who beholds a picture of remarkable beauty.

2. I say that this prayer is justly termed the prayer of repose or recollection. We find there in fact, neither variety, multiplicity, change of representation or busy reasoning; the memory, understanding, and will, closely united, are fixed on God, attentively contemplate His mysteries, and enjoy a profound tranquillity. Hence we may judge what difference there exists, between this contemplative prayer, and meditation; for meditation runs from one thing to another, to discover a hidden truth, or to comprehend it more clearly, while contemplation perceives the Sovereign Truth, at one simple glance, with great admiration, sweet complacency, and delightful joy.

3. This prayer is a prayer of silence, because the soul speaks not, but listens with deep attention, to what her heavenly Master speaks to her heart, and teaches her regarding Himself, and His mysteries. We must not however fancy, as inexperienced persons usually do, that in this silence, the powers of the soul are so suspended as to be entirely inactive; that is impossible in a person that is awake; at least it would be most certainly a great torment. I will say more: it might be exceedingly injurious to him, as besides the time he would lose in idleness, he would be exposed to

the deceits of the devil, and to the follies of his own wild imagination. It is then certain, that as long as God does not work in the soul, she must make use of her faculties, and even during the time that God works in her, she acts with Him, as a scholar listens in silence to his master's lesson, and makes his understanding and will agree with what is said to him. Neither is the silence of which we here speak, the silence of the tongue, for it takes place in all kinds of mental prayer; it is a silence, of the soul, which does not even require that the powers should be wholly silent: it is enough that they are occupied with what God works in them, according to these words of the Royal Prophet: "I will listen to what God speaks to me interiorly." "Audiam quid loquatur in me Dominus Deus."

In this prayer, in effect, God deigns to instruct His creature, to speak to her heart, to reveal to her His truths, and attract her strongly towards them, without it being necessary for her to have recourse to her own efforts, as she must do in her meditations and prayers. This is then a passive state, as St. Denis teaches: "Patiens divina;" that is, she listens, instead of speaking, and receives, rather than seeks. That explains why interior attention to the voice of God, is called silence: for then all creatures are silent in the heart, and there is no sound that can disturb its profound peace. The soul in this state, says the Holy Ghost in the Book of Canticles, sleeps and watches at the same time, "Ego dormio, et cor

meum vigilat." The heart watches in its attention to know and love God, and to act with Him, and the soul seems asleep as regards all exterior things, so that she sees nothing of what takes place out of her, and hears nothing that is said to her. Finally, it is in this prayer that union takes place, because the soul, more clearly enlightened regarding God's greatness, and inflamed with extraordinary love, attaches herself to Him so strongly that she becomes, as the apostle teaches, one spirit with Him. "Qui adhæret Domino unus spiritus est." Then she can neither see, love, nor will anything but this sovereign good, and her sole language is to cry out with the Royal Prophet: "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" "Quid mihi est in cœlo, et a Te quid volui super terram?" (Ps. lxxii. 25.) Or with the Spouse in the Canticles: "I have found Him whom my soul loveth; I have held Him, and I will not let Him go." "Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum, nec dimittam." Such are the names most usually given to the prayer of repose or quiet, in which abound heavenly lights and lively affections towards the divine mysteries. The light received by the soul, is not always of the same kind. Sometimes it is given by imaginary representations, imprinted in her by God; sometimes by a simple light of the intellect, but so sublime and clear, that it leads to the highest point of mystical theology. This is what St. Denis calls entering into the divine obscurity, "in divinam caliginem;" that is, into the inacces-

sible light, wherein union with our Lord is effected. This degree is so sublime, and the union wrought therein so ineffable, that God alone can, by a special grace, raise the soul to it. What she there beholds is great and wonderful; but beyond, there opens, as it were, an infinite abyss, which prevents her mind from penetrating further; so that what she perceives, is nothing in comparison to what she is ignorant of. The extraordinary circumstances that usually accompany this prayer, have caused several other names to be given to it: thus, when the illustrations, visitations, interior visions, and transports of love produced by union, raise the soul above the senses, so that the body becomes insensible and immoveable, it is called suspension or extasy. When that takes place by a strong and sudden operation, it receives the name of rapture. It was thus that St. Paul found himself rapt to the third heaven. If this rapture be accompanied with great interior sweetness, it is then a spiritual flight. Was it not to this that David alluded, when he said: "Who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may fly away and be at rest?" "Quis dabit mihi pennas, sicut columbæ, tunc volabo et requiescam." It sometimes happens that the body is lifted up from the earth, by the impetuous movement of the soul, rising to the contemplation of heavenly things. But, in all these extasies and raptures, the mind is neither idle nor asleep: it sees, hears, understands, admires, rejoices and loves. When it remains inactive, and God does not work in it, its state is

stupor, slumber, or an illusion of the spirit of darkness. In conclusion we may say, that these things being very dangerous, we must neither desire nor seek after them, but rather avoid them, unless our Lord should manifest His will in this regard, in a way that excludes all doubt.

2. After explaining clearly this method of prayer or contemplation, it will not be useless to examine the reasons, why Father Balthasar was raised to it. It is probable that the first was, the need he had of it, as a master in spiritual knowledge, and guide of several souls, called to walk in these sublime paths. Such was his own conviction, as may be gathered from his own words: "He who has never learned Greek, can neither read books in Greek, nor express himself in that language, much less give others lessons in it. I may say as much, and with stronger reason, of a director that is ignorant in spiritual science. He is obliged by his state, to give advice to all, and to direct each one, according to his advancement, in the path pointed out to him by Almighty God, for though all souls tend to the same end, there are different methods of attaining it; and to direct well in all these ways, it is very necessary that he should have traversed them himself. I know that the reading of ascetic works, and of the lives of the saints, may be of great use to him, but, after all, experience is the best mistress, and makes the most skilful directors. Is it not a great consolation for a disciple to hear from his guide: 'I have experienced what you tell me, and

the same things you mention have happened to me?' Is there anything more encouraging to a soul yet inexperienced, than to see her director meet her half way in her wants, anticipate her questions, understand at the first word what she wishes to say, and explain clearly what she desires to express, but cannot find words? It is certain that this experience of the director, contributes greatly to the progress of his disciples, gains him their confidence, and makes them say as the apostles formerly did to Jesus Christ: 'Now we know that all things are known to you, and that you have no need that any one should ask you.' 'Nunc scimus quia scis omnia, et non est tibi opus ut quis te interroget.' 'This makes us believe you to be a man of God, and that it is He who speaks by your mouth.' 'In hoc credimus, quia à Deo existi.' It is, therefore, sometimes expedient, that directors should manifest themselves to those whom they direct, and communicate themselves to them, though with wise discretion." These are Father Balthasar's words, on the reason of his own experience, which furnished him with the means of directing souls so perfectly, and gained for him the reputation of a very able director.

The second reason of this gift of sublime prayer, was the necessity of preserving him from the injury, that a life so active and so taken up with others, might have caused him. God did for him what the prophet Eliseus desired, when he begged Him to give him the twofold spirit of Elias. He gave him a remarkable talent for

his neighbour's salvation, and at the same time admitted him to so sublime a degree of prayer, that he enjoyed as much repose as if he had been in a desert; so that action was no hindrance to his contemplation, nor contemplation any impediment to action. Cassian says (Coll. 19, 9), "That this double perfection is very rare, and is only found in very great saints, as St. Anthony and St. Macarius." It pleased God, however, to make Father Balthasar a sharer in these high privileges, by teaching him to unite together divine familiarity, and conversation with creatures, without their opposing each other, and in such a way, that they were a mutual assistance. It is remarkable, that it was precisely at the period of his profession, when he consecrated himself to the service of his neighbour, that God granted him this grace, as if to show him, that it was not given him, that he might live in solitude, but to employ himself with greater safety in the guidance of souls. Nothing is better adapted to unite together two occupations, so opposite in appearance, as a method of prayer, in which the soul sails on, not laboriously by rowing, but before the wind, as it is said, that is, by the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

The third reason which explains the bestowing of this favour is, that God, in His goodness, wished to reward his perseverance in prayer through the understanding, which is meditation. No doubt this method of prayer has its utility, for it produces excellent fruits for the advancement of

souls; but those of contemplation are much more abundant, and are derived with greater facility and consolation. He who reasons and meditates, labours and becomes fatigued, like one who draws water from a well, by the strength of his arm, to fertilize his garden; but the water of contemplation falls of itself, like an abundant rain, whose beneficial effects the Holy Spirit has deigned to make known to us. "Lord," said the Royal Prophet, "Thou hast watered the earth with Thy rains, and hast loaded it with riches. These waters will be its joy, for they will give it fertility." (Ps. lxiv.)

God usually grants this gift of contemplation to those, who have long laboured at the purification of their hearts, at overcoming their passions, and meditating on the truths of the Gospel, especially when they labour zealously to sanctify and save others, if He judges it expedient for their perfection. It was thus that He acted towards St. Ignatius. Father Balthasar received the same grace from His liberality, because, like his blessed father, he persevered with equal humility and resignation, in the exercise of ordinary prayer.

3. We must not attempt to arrive at contemplation, otherwise than through the gate of meditation, or to prescribe to Almighty God the time of His visit. It belongs to Him to say to His servant: "Friend, go up higher." Until that time, we must be content with the method of ordinary prayer. Father Balthasar remained in this path fourteen years, St. Teresa eighteen

years, other saints a still longer time, and this need not surprise any one, who knows how to appreciate such a favour. If Jacob did not think it too much to obtain Rachel, a figure of the contemplative life, by a painful service of fourteen years, shall we be surprised, to see noble and enlightened souls doing as much, to arrive at true contemplation? No, without doubt: so much the more, as, while waiting for this grace, they acquire very great benefits, by acknowledging themselves unworthy of it, by labouring to purify themselves more and more, and by multiplying their holy desires, biding God's time with as much patience as confidence. By the practice of all these virtues, they render themselves worthy of the desired favour, and when once they have obtained it, they show themselves so much the more grateful, so much the more diligent in preserving it, and reaping its fruits, as its acquisition has been more difficult. Then these favourites of God are capable of guiding others, in the path which is so well known to them; they then know how to encourage their disciples, and support them amidst aridity and afflictions of all kinds. We know this from happy experience, under the guidance of Father Balthasar. O, how touching were his exhortations! how powerful his zeal to animate us to prayer! I will here relate a few of his words on this subject.

"Let us not be tired, my brethren, of going to the gates of God, which are always open, or which will certainly open immediately when we knock,

according to this promise: 'Knock, and it shall be opened to you.' 'Pulsate, et aperietur vobis.' (Luke xi.) How is it, that this promise of Jesus Christ to us, does not suffice to make us bear His delays in peace, and to support our confidence? Can we then doubt of the teaching of faith? Reason alone would suffice to reassure us. Does it not, in effect, tell us, that the hardest heart cannot bear to see a poor man trembling with cold at his door, without opening it? Now, the Heart of God is not a hard heart, it is the heart of a father. Let us then, my brethren, persevere in knocking at the door of this great God, even if an icy cold should seize us. At the moment when we least think of it, Assuerus will open the door to Mardocheus, and admit him into his presence. Then his happiness will make him quickly forget the miserable days, passed at the gate of this great king."

In confirmation of this doctrine, he cited to us his own example: after which he added, that God delays to manifest Himself to souls, for one of these two reasons; either because they are negligent in purifying themselves, or because they do not sufficiently esteem the grace they ask. "Every kind of vice," he added, "is like a dark cloud that intercepts the Creator's presence, and nothing is more adapted to make us esteem this favour, than to know what it costs, and how long it must be waited for." The reader can judge what must have been the excellence of the father's prayer, and the greatness of the gifts it obtained for him;

for if the harvest usually corresponds with the cultivation, if consolations are given in proportion to afflictions, and if the labour is the measure of the reward, a man who had sowed for fourteen years in labours and sorrows, cannot fail to reap an abundance of merits, consolations, and gifts of all kinds, having to deal with a Master, Whose generosity exceeds the demands of those who ask, and even their hopes. We shall see this in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE FATHER'S VOCATION TO THIS DEGREE OF PRAYER, AND THE ADVANTAGES HE DERIVED FROM IT FOR HIS OWN PERFECTION, AND THE GOOD OF THE SOULS ENTRUSTED TO HIM.

Contemplation is so excellent and profitable a grace, that Father Balthasar, from his own confession, could not have obtained it, but by the special vocation of God. This is easy to understand; for what right can any man, however holy, have to so great an elevation? Neither time, place, nor merit, can give it. God calls to it whom He pleases, when He pleases, and as He pleases. It is a pure favour, a privilege granted without any claim. In order to approach His divine Majesty, the soul, even were she another Esther, must await His summons; now this

summons is an inspiration, an emotion, or lively affection of the soul, that inclines her to this sublime kind of prayer, and gives her at the same time an aptitude for it. This vocation and this aptitude are not given to all, who lead a spiritual life; and those who are deprived of them, should not aim so high, it would be in them great rashness and a culpable pride. There are souls, who, from childhood, and at the period of their conversion, are at once drawn to this sublime prayer, and sometimes also, to very extraordinary favours; but that very rarely happens. The practice of meditation for a longer or shorter term, is what most men are called to, and is the ordinary way. To support this doctrine, I will cite a fact taken from holy Scripture. We read in Exodus, that the people of Israel assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai, heard voices and the sound of trumpets, and saw lights burning, and the mountain enveloped in smoke, which petrified them with terror. In their fright they went away, and said to Moses: "Speak to us yourself, and we will hear you; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." Moses, wishing to comfort them, answered: "Fear not, it is to try you, that God has appeared on the mountain: His desire in alarming you, is to give you a horror of sin." Then taking with him his brother Aaron, and the seventy ancients of Israel, they advanced towards the mountain, and saw the Lord, on a throne of sapphires, of a celestial blue. Then Moses dismissed his companions, and ascended the mountain with Josue

alone. As he walked, a thick cloud covered the mountain for six days successively, and prevented his reaching the top; but on the seventh day, God having called him, he entered into the cloud, leaving Josue behind, and remained forty days and forty nights with God, Who spoke to him face to face, as a man usually converses with his friend. It is thus that God acts towards His people in the new Law. The greater number of the faithful, destitute of spiritual light, and too much taken up with temporal things, are called to vocal prayer only, and to the remote consideration of the divine mysteries; those which inspire fear, deter from sin, and lead the sinner to repentance. Others more instructed, and less occupied with earthly things, represented by the seventy ancients, are called to approach God more closely, by the practice of mental prayer; a more profound meditation on the divine mysteries, and the affections of more fervent love and livelier hope. These attain to the knowledge of God by His works, which are, as it were, His footstool; I mean the beauty of the heavens, of the stars, and of the riches of the earth, whence they deduce by reasoning, the greatness and the perfections of the Creator, and feel urged to serve Him because He deserves it, and gratitude requires it from them. This class is composed of religious persons, and others given to meditation, of which I will speak later, and explain its importance, its security, and its abundant fruits. Others, fewer in number, ascend higher like Josue, but without however attaining

to contemplation. Some indeed, like Moses, are specially called by God, to the highest degree of prayer. They enter into a thick cloud, which hides from them the sight of earthly things, that their eyes may be fixed on Heaven. In this state, they contemplate their Creator, as clearly as our state in this world will allow. They unite themselves closely to Him, and are admitted to familiarity with Him; some more, some less, as it is pleasing in His sight. However, before He raises them to the highest point, He keeps them for six days in a lower degree, to try their patience, and dispose them to receive the greatest grace. Such should be all directors of souls; such at least was Father Balthasar. Persons of prayer found in him, therefore, a guide both safe and singularly gifted. We will here enter upon a more ample explanation, of the various favours granted him, through his elevation to this exalted state.

We will remark as the basis of what we are going to say, that the first gift, and the source of all others in this extraordinary state, is to have God Himself for Master and Director in prayer; not in the same manner as other souls, whom He moves and teaches to meditate well, but in a much more particular, intimate, and consoling manner, by inspirations and illustrations, which leave little to be done by these privileged souls. We will give his own teaching on this point, the result of his experience: "If God," he said, "takes from a soul the faculty of reasoning in prayer, it is a sign that He wishes to be in a

special manner her Master. This impediment, in fact, can only proceed from the interior. Now, none but God alone can penetrate into the interior of the soul, when the doors are closed. Neither the good or bad angels have this power; this sign is therefore very certain and free from illusion. Besides, the peace and joy which accompany this operation, clearly prove the presence and action of the Divine Majesty." "One day," he says elsewhere, "as I was making my morning prayer, and thinking of the loss I felt from the absence of my guide, it was said to me interiorly: 'He does God an injury, who, while conversing with Him, imagines he needs human assistance, of which he is deprived without any fault of his own.' Some hours after, as I was celebrating the holy mysteries, the same sorrowful thought occurred to me, and I heard the same voice saying: 'If He who directed thee by means of a man, wishes now to direct thee Himself, what right hast thou to complain?' On the contrary, it is a signal blessing and the prelude of great favours. God can in one word enlighten regarding many things; and the prayer which He vouchsafes to guide, abounds in all kinds of blessings. It produces respect, tranquil confidence, intelligence of the most sublime truths, accompanied with the sweetest and most delightful consolation."

This direction of God Himself, gained for him a second signal grace; that of penetrating into the secrets of the Divinity, as masters in mystical theology explain it; but let us allow him to

describe this new favour himself. "On the last day of January 1576, I had, towards evening, a conversation with a spiritual person, on the subject, of knowing what the intellectual vision of God and His mysteries is. This person knew more about it than myself; but the following day, on awaking, I had a sort of view, of the light of which she had spoken, the day before. Having placed myself in prayer, I felt that God was there. I saw Him; neither with my bodily eyes, nor through my imagination: nevertheless His presence was certain to me, and the sight I had of it was far more powerful than that of the imagination, or of the corporal eyes. I cannot explain this method of seeing, but it may be recognised by the following marks:

"1. This view makes more impression on the soul than that of the imagination, and of the bodily eyes.

"2. It communicates such peace, and so deep a consolation, that it seems as if God had brought the soul into His eternal kingdom. Surprised at a happiness which she was far from expecting, and which she knows to be undeserved, she then cries out, transported beyond herself: 'What is man, O my God! that he should have a place in Thy remembrance, or the son of man that Thou shouldst deign thus to visit him?' 'Quid est homo quod memor es ejus, aut filius hominis, quoniam visitas eum?' (Ps. viii.) Jesus Christ tells us that on the day of judgment the just will ask Him in their surprise at being called to share

His kingdom: 'When, O Lord, have we shown Thee hospitality?' &c. With the same astonishment the soul asks of Almighty God, in the state of which I am speaking: 'What services, O my God, have I rendered Thee? What have I done to merit so great a blessing?' This gives some sign of the peace she enjoys, and the consolation she experiences.

"3. The soul, when she quits this state, belongs no more to herself, nor to any creature; she is all to Him Who is all, and she may say with the Royal Prophet: 'One grace have I asked of the Lord; this will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of God.' 'Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini.' (Ps. xxvi.) This transport may be understood, for in the prayer on which the soul has entered, God begins to enlighten her, to manifest Himself to her, and honour her with His caresses. One other feeling increases her joy, and completely moves her; she feels that she loves creatures for God, and not for herself, and much more than if they belonged to her.

"4. If the thought should occur to this soul, that what passes in her may be an illusion, she despises this fear, convinced that the devil, who is of a violent nature, is incapable of procuring her the peace she enjoys.

"5. She feels no drowsiness. Prayer causes her no fatigue, for she is like St. Peter on Mount Tabor, and can say with that apostle: 'Lord, it is

good for us to be here.' 'Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.'

"6. She feels herself to be in the state, spoken of by St. Denis in his mystical theology, when he says: 'That the mind which comprehends nothing (in this kind of prayer) surpasses all understanding.' It seems to her, in fact, that she knows nothing, and feels no curiosity whatever, content with what she possesses, without seeing it; but she is, at the same time, more certain of its possession than if she saw it with her eyes, or touched it with her hands."

This doctrine suffices, to show the light that prayer communicated to his understanding; it opened to him, as it were, the kingdom of God, where reside justice, peace, and the joy of the Holy Ghost. He came from it, wholly belonging to God, and united to Him so closely, that he seemed to be one spirit with Him. This led him to say one day to an afflicted soul, with whom he was conversing on prayer: "As for me, I have long dwelt in another country;" which meant, if I mistake not, that his conversation was already in heaven. To this favour, God added that of giving him the assurance of his eternal salvation, a favour as rare as wonderful, but nevertheless certain; for he himself acknowledged it to Father Gilles de Mata. It took place as follows:

These two Religious being one day in conversation, on the happiness of an apostolic man, who, amidst the dangers to which he exposes himself in the Divine service, should be assured of his

salvation: Father Balthasar said to Father Mata: "As for me, I know for certain that God will save my soul, and I have no fear at all on the subject." This assurance was not founded merely on the revelation made to St. Teresa: he saw himself one day, during prayer, in the assembly of the blessed, and he told it to his superior, in giving him an account of conscience.

Amidst such favours, it is not surprising that he should have sometimes had extasies, which raised him from the ground, and deprived him of the use of his senses. During his stay at Métine, one of the fathers having entered the room when he was in prayer, saw him surrounded with brilliant light. The brother who waited upon him, found him one day so completely absorbed, that he did not perceive his entrance. Nevertheless, as the extasy was nearly over, he heard the noise the brother made in going away, and running after him, forbade him to tell any one anything extraordinary that he might have seen. The same thing occurred at Salamanca, and another brother witnessed the favour. Father Gaspard Astetius related the following fact to any one who wished to hear it:—

"When I was minister in our house at Val d'Olet, Father Balthasar fell ill there; the infirmarian having left him at night, after supplying all his wants, went to him very early the next morning, and found him unconscious. Informed of his state, I sent for the physician, who saw no danger, and pronounced it to be merely a fainting

fit. Nevertheless, it lasted until night, which seemed to be very unusual. Having then applied to him a relic of the true Cross, and several others, he came at once to himself, and began to speak like a man in health. All the fathers who were present, thought, with me, that what had happened was a rapture, and not a swoon. And the repetition of these favours speedily convinced us that we had judged rightly."

From the time that God began to treat him in this manner, the father walked in His presence with a much more lively faith, having recourse to Him continually in all his affairs, to take counsel, implore His help, and follow His direction. This may be inferred from the following words, which he frequently used: "To pray, is to raise our heart to God, to communicate with Him familiarly, though with great respect, regarding all our affairs, to confide in Him more than a child confides in his mother, however good she may be; to offer Him all that we possess, all that we hope for, without any reserve; to open our heart to Him, and pour it out, as it were, before Him; to speak to Him of our labours, of our sins, of our desires, our projects, and all that occupies our mind; finally, to seek in Him our consolation and our repose, as one friend with another, in whom he has full confidence." This is what holy Scripture calls "pouring out our heart like water in the presence of God." (Thren. ii. 19.) It does not say like oil, because some part always remains in the vessel, but like water, of which none is left behind. This

is a very wise practice; for, if it be true, that Divine Providence rules all things, and that we can do nothing good without His help, we cannot do better, than converse with God, regarding all our affairs, without exception. This habitual familiarity with his Divine Master, obtained for the father new graces and precious gifts, which greatly assisted him in his ministry for the salvation of souls: thus, for instance, he received the grace of praying with such efficacious confidence, that he never asked in vain for the graces necessary for himself and for others. It happened in this way: being one day in prayer on these words of the Gospel: "Petite et accipietis:" "Ask and you shall receive"—God made known to him that the more we ask, the more we are sure to please Him, and that any reserve in this regard, can be inspired only by the devil.

On another occasion, when asking a favour for a needy soul, he heard interiorly a voice which said to him: "If God is liberal in His gifts, why art thou so reserved in thy prayers?" As if to show him, that instead of praying for one poor soul, he would have done better to recommend all.

Another time, having begged from God the success of an undertaking, this good Master answered: "I will hear thee as a king." It often happened on these occasions, that God revealed to him the success of his prayers, or gave him this assurance by an interior instinct, which,

as Cassian tells us, is a sign that the prayer is granted.

At the same time God granted the father a new grace, by supplying what was wanting to him, in learning and knowledge. This fact is attested by Father Pinœdo, who assures us he had it from the mouth of the holy man himself. He made this acknowledgment on the following occasion. Pinœdo had been a canon at Salamanca, before entering the Society of Jesus, and had only studied jurisprudence: he was consequently ordered to follow the course of philosophy and theology. These studies alarmed him, for he feared he should never succeed. Having opened his mind to the father, he said to him in confidence to encourage him: "I have myself experienced the fear that troubles you. When I was studying theology, not being able to give my attention to it sufficiently, on account of my other employments, I feared to be wanting in the knowledge necessary for the functions of the sacerdotal ministry, which made me very sad and uneasy: but after exercising myself in prayer for a long time, I received one day so extraordinary a light in the understanding, that it acquired for me at once all the theological learning I needed, which I have preserved up to this hour." He also told another father, that God had given him the intelligence of the Holy Scriptures, and of moral subjects, so that he no longer required to consult any one, though before he received this grace, he could not do without a companion to enlighten

him regarding the least difficulties. "My understanding is not great," he said another time, "and my studies have been very light; yet through my relations with the souls entrusted to me, the reading of the Lives of Saints, and the frequent use of prayer, I have acquired all the knowledge necessary for my ministry." He had then drawn from three sources, that science of the saints which caused him to do so much good, and gained him so great a reputation; but there is no doubt, though he does not say so, that prayer was the most fruitful. The proof I give is, that he owed his great skill, to the light of which we have elsewhere spoken, and that this light was given him in prayer. Besides, it suffices that we consider the nature of the knowledge in question, to be assured that its source was in prayer. There are two things, says St. Gregory, and St. Thomas after him, that can only come from God: the knowledge of the secrets of the human heart, and that of future events. Now, Father Balthasar possessed this double privilege, as we have already seen, and shall see again later on.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FATHER GAINS GREAT FRUITS AT METINE, IN LABOURING FOR SOULS, BOTH BY THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, AND BY THE EFFICACIOUSNESS OF HIS PRAYERS.

Though Father Balthasar's employments had for their object, the spiritual good of those belonging to the Society, his charity extended itself to those beyond its pale, and not in vain; for the souls that placed themselves in his hands, profited wonderfully by his guidance. His chief means of success lay in the power of his prayers, and the knowledge God gave him of the secrets of hearts. Let us begin by speaking of the efficaciousness of his prayers, or rather, let us prove it by facts.

When he was at the College of Métine, a young secular came thither to make the exercises, with a view of entering the Society; but the devil was on the watch, to hinder him from following this salutary idea. On the fourth day, he tempted him so strongly to return to the world, that he took this unfortunate resolution. The poor young man told the father, who was giving him the exercises, that he wished to leave. The father tried in vain to prove to him by the strongest reasons, that this thought came from the devil, and that he could not yield to it without placing his salvation in danger:

the unfortunate young man would listen to nothing. The father, deeply afflicted, ran to Father Balthasar, then Rector of the College, and informed him of the circumstance. He went immediately to the young man, and begged him to remain until the next day at least, to please him. This delay was disagreeable to the youth, and more so to the devil, who feared its consequences; but he durst not disobey the holy man, as much through the veneration he had for him, as through a fear of drawing down upon himself some chastisement from heaven. The father, after taking a severe discipline, spent the whole night in prayer, entreating our Lord to open the eyes of this poor blind soul, and remove the temptation which had overcome him. Almighty God could not be deaf to so fervent an entreaty, and He granted his prayer in the following manner. The young man, who was then in a deep sleep, saw in a dream, at the College gate, two men of frightful aspect, waiting for him sword in hand, and showing by their menacing gestures their intention of killing him, if he ventured to put his foot beyond the threshold. The effect proved that this dream came from God, for his change was such, that he could scarcely wait for the dawn of day, to go and throw himself at the father's feet, and ask leave to be admitted into the Society. The father having consented, he continued the exercises, at the end of which he was received into the noviciate, and became in due course, a fervent and useful religious man.

I may mention another similar fact, which took place in the same College. The devil, wishing to gain over a novice, inspired him with the desire of quitting his order, to enter into that of the Carthusians. The young man should at once have manifested the temptation to the father master; but he did not, either for want of courage, or because the deceiver put such a thought out of his head. However it might be, yielding to the treacherous advice, he changed his clothes, hid himself in the garden before the doors were closed, then scaling the enclosure wall in the dark, he went towards the Carthusian monastery of Aniago. When the time for making the visit had come, he Religious who was upon duty, not finding him in bed, went to tell the Father Rector. This good father, moved with compassion, ran and shut himself up in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin; where he took the discipline according to his custom, and spent the night in prayer; begging Jesus Christ and His holy Mother to bring back to him this lost sheep, for fear it might become the prey of wolves and fall into hell, into which they would endeavour to drag him. This prayer was so powerful, that, besides the grace asked for, it obtained for him a revelation, that assured him of the return of this prodigal child. The novice was seized with a panic terror, fancying himself pursued. He began to walk with hurried steps, but a new fear soon arrested his career. "What shall I say to the Carthusians," he asked himself, "when I come before them? If I tell them

whence I come, they will have nothing to do with me; and if I do not tell them, they will soon find it out, and will send me away from their monastery. I had better not go: but then, what shall I do? I cannot make up my mind to go back to the noviciate, and to return to the world is a dangerous step, and disgraceful besides." As he made these sorrowful reflections, he continued to walk to the monastery. When he came to a bridge, the enemy made a most violent attack upon him; urging him to despair, and persuading him to throw himself into the water, to put an end to his distressing perplexity. The poor youth would perhaps have yielded to the temptation, when, through the prayers of Father Balthasar, a ray of hope shone in his soul. "But," he said to himself, "what hinders me from going back again? I left in the night; perhaps no one has noticed my absence. I can again climb over the wall into the garden, the doors will be opened at daylight; I will take advantage of it, to go in and again join my brethren." He then turned back, went to the College, mounted the wall, hid himself in the garden until the doors were opened; then slipping into the house at the hour of prayer, when all the courts are deserted, he changed his clothes, and reappeared at the proper time. The father who had found out his absence, seeing him with the others, hastened to give notice of his return to Father Balthasar. "I know it," said the holy man, "and I thank the Father of Mercies for it." A few days afterwards, having sent for this novice

to his room, he made him relate his adventure; and confirmed him so strongly in his vocation, that he never had any further temptation on the subject. A still more wonderful circumstance happened to Father Francis d'Abula, a great Religious of our Society. When he was studying at Salamanca, where he was distinguished for his good looks and the elegance of his dress, and thought of nothing less than leaving the world, he asked leave, at the beginning of Lent, to be received into the College, to perform the spiritual exercises; a very common devotion at that time, with the students of this celebrated university. Scarcely had a few days passed, than God showed him in the clearest and most convincing manner, that His designs over him required him to renounce the world, and enter into the Society. This sudden but undoubted vocation caused him such anguish, that he was obliged to leave his room to take the air, as he felt as if suffocating. Father Balthasar having come across him, asked him the reason of his changed appearance; and having received his confidence, promised to pray and to ask prayers for him. He prayed himself, in fact, and so efficaciously, that the young man at once recovered his tranquillity, overcame his repugnance, and made his election of the religious state in the Society. Some minutes later, the father made him a visit, and heard his account of what he had just done. "Very well," said the man of God, smiling, "but we must thank God for this great blessing." "I knew," he added, "that this would be the

end of the storm." Thereupon Francis asked leave for his admission, the father granted it and left him; but immediately the temptation returned like a thunderbolt, and so completely upset his resolution, that he determined to leave the College, to give himself time to reflect on a choice, which would embrace his whole life. His difficulty was to find a reason for the permission he wished to ask, for he did not feel courage enough to acknowledge his design. After a short consideration, he went to the father and told him he wished to return home to settle his affairs, and bid farewell to his family. "Go, my son," answered Father Balthasar, "and as you want time to reflect further on what you have to do, we will employ it on our side, in examining what we ought to do regarding you." Francis, seeing his thoughts discovered, was as much moved as surprised, and still more convinced of the will of God, he surrendered at once.

This leads us to speak of the gift of prophecy, which Father Balthasar had received, and by means of which his ministry produced wonderful fruits. Before his penitents opened their hearts to him, he knew all their secrets, God making them known to him, for ends conformable to His designs on these souls—but we must prove this by facts. Francis Raynos, who was afterwards Bishop of Cordova, on his return from the court, where he had obtained considerable benefices, went to our house at Sentica, to perform the spiritual exercises. Providence arranged that

Father Balthasar was given him as guide in this important affair. This father, as is the custom on such occasions, frequently visited him, especially at the times of necessary relaxation, and conversed with him, of course on subjects useful to his salvation. In one of his visits, wishing to gain his confidence, he told him all his secret thoughts, absolutely as if he were reading his heart. Francis, struck with astonishment, burst into tears, and full of confidence in the father's virtue and wisdom, regulated his life as he desired. His docility in the hands of so experienced a master, was in the highest degree beneficial to him; he became from that time a man of great prayer, and attained a high degree of virtue.

Among those whose confessions he heard, was a lady named Helen Quirogia, niece of Cardinal Gaspard Quirogia, Archbishop of Toledo, who afterwards entered a convent of Discalced Carmelites, where she lived and died holily. This lady felt pleasure in relating in the father's praise, two wonderful effects produced in her by his direction. "His words," she said, "entered much more deeply into my heart than those of others, softening and inflaming it wonderfully. It was seldom that his words did not make me melt into tears. Once, in particular, he caused me to weep for my sins a hundred times more than I had done during my whole life. This lasted several days, and afterwards, when I mentioned to him this extraordinary compunction, he replied: 'God be praised that we have been able to draw

water from this rock; but it is enough for the present,' and he then consoled me. The second wonderful effect which I experienced was, that he always said to me those things that were most necessary for my soul, as if he saw with his eyes what I was in need of. Sometimes, even before I could manifest my necessity to him, he prescribed the suitable remedy. Thus, for instance, having one day gone to confession with a very sad heart, scarcely had I entered the confessional than he said to me, 'Have courage, my child, the seeding time is good, we shall have an abundant harvest. Nothing is so productive of fruit as trials, when we bear them patiently.' Another time, when I was lamenting in my heart, over an aridity that rendered prayer very painful to me, he anticipated the account I was going to give him of it, saying, 'If dryness is good for the fruits of the earth, we shall have a good harvest this year.' These words consoled my heart, and reanimated my courage."

Almost the same thing happened to another servant of God, to whom he allowed daily communion, on account of her solid virtues. One day, when she went to confession, he made her wait two hours, and on his coming to the confessional, he told her, in succession, all the thoughts that had come into her mind while she was waiting; which filled her with astonishment.

Dona Anna Henriquez, sister of the Marquis of Alcanize, has related, among many remarkable circumstances that had happened to her, in her

relations with the father, a fact well worthy of notice. "Father Balthasar being at Métine when I was in a distant town, saw in spirit that I was in profound affliction. Moved by my distress, he besought of God to give me an opportunity of seeing him, that he might give me the consolation I required. His prayer was not in vain: for an unforeseen event, which obliged my husband to travel beyond Métine, afforded me this opportunity. I asked him to go through that town; he consented with difficulty, as it obliged him to make a considerable circuit: but he granted me this favour, no doubt, owing to the father's prayers. I profited by it to go to confession, and this confession was to me a benefit beyond expression. Never had my heart felt consolation equal to that, which the father's words gave me, insomuch that I said at last: 'It is enough, father, I cannot bear more.'" This pious woman added, that he had often predicted to her, future events, and that they had always come to pass in fulfilment of his words.

While he was living at Avila, one of his penitents, who was very uneasy at the absence of her husband, of whom she could not obtain any news, went to him in the confessional, to seek some consolation. At first, moved by her tears, he could not restrain his own, but at the same time, raising his heart to God, the true consoler of the afflicted, he received from Him a prophetic light, which led him to say: "Let us cease to weep. All is well; your husband will certainly return

this week." He did return, as the father said; and this person, delighted to have such a confessor, was more than ever submissive to him, which contributed much to her spiritual progress. Some time after, the same man received a similar service from the father, which he related as follows. "My mother-in-law was dangerously ill, in a place far distant from Avila, and I could not at that time go to her. The news having been given me, as it often happens, with considerable exaggeration, my brain became confused, and I imagined she was dead, taking with her some secrets which she should have made known. Deeply grieved by this loss, and its probable consequences, I went to open my heart to the father, who, after God, was everything to me. I felt the benefit of this manifestation, for he at once told me that my mother-in-law was not dead, and that she had quite sufficient life in her, to make the declarations in question. I had, in fact, time to go to her, and everything took place according to my desires."

A young Religious of the Society, allowing the devil to persuade him, that he was wanting in the necessary talents, for labouring with fruit in the salvation of souls, was deeply grieved in consequence. He spoke of this several times to the father, who did not think proper to give him any answer, which made him determine that he would henceforward keep his secret to himself. One day, however, when the temptation was unusually pressing, he met the father, and said to him: "You know what troubles me, father; I

am more tormented to-day than ever." "Do you believe," answered the holy man, "that the Society possesses what is required to procure your salvation?" As he answered in the affirmative, the father rejoined, "Not only will you save yourself, but you will contribute efficaciously to the salvation of several souls, and you will live happily in your state." Nothing more was required to remove the temptation, and the prophecy was literally accomplished. This was not the only service rendered by the holy man to this Religious, but the other facts will be told in due time.

CHAPTER XVII.

INFLUENCE OF FATHER BALTHASAR'S EXHORTATIONS OVER A GREAT NUMBER OF SOULS, SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS.

God did not bestow on His servant the talent of preaching, doubtless, to give him a subject of humiliation of himself and esteem of others; but, to make up for it, he gave him everything that constitutes an able director, and particularly the eminent gift of spiritual exhortations. In consequence, this holy man left to others the duty of proclaiming the word of God from the pulpit, and concentrated his zeal, in the ministry best suited to him. God never failed to furnish him with men, powerful in word, who seemed to have

no other mission, than to lead men to the confessional. Thus, when he was rector of the college at Métine, his superiors allotted him as preacher, Father Baptist Sancius, an eloquent and deeply interior man. His prayer was so sublime and consoling, that he desired nothing more. "Believe me, father," he one day said to Father Balthasar, "if I had at my disposal all the consolation that can be enjoyed on earth, I would willingly exchange it for one quarter of an hour's prayer. I have no wish but for heaven, and this is so strong, that it would kill me, if God should assure me in the morning, that I should live through the day." This clearly shows the high degree of love to which he had attained. But, as God seems to apply Himself to mortify His elect, in what they most love and desire, He revealed to him a long time before, the day and hour of his death, so that love became his most cruel executioner. Father Balthasar had so high an opinion of the sanctity of this Religious, that he one day said to his novices: "Look at Father Sancius, in him you have not only a virtuous man, but virtue itself." United together by great similarity of mind and feeling, they loved to converse together on spiritual subjects, and their words were so burning, that a priest, who one day heard them, said they spoke like two seraphim. During their stay at Métine they laboured together in admirable union, for the salvation of souls. Father Baptist, by his fervent sermons, filled the Church with hearers, and worked conversions

without number, while Father Balthasar guided many chosen souls in the path of perfection. I said that this holy man, to supply the want of oratorical power, had received a great gift of exhortation; I will prove it by some examples. A nobleman had conceived so mad a love for a woman, that he fell ill, and was in danger of death. Father Balthasar, informed of his sad state, went to see him, and spoke to him with so much strength and reason, that his passion was obliged to yield. His repentance was deep, and his change so extraordinary, that he said to his benefactor before he left him, "You have just worked a miracle, Father, for my heart is so changed, that I cannot imagine how it has been done; before I saw you, I was dying with the wish to satisfy my passion, now I would rather die than yield to it. No, certainly, I will not scandalize that woman and offend God, even if this sin would restore me to life." His exhortations had no less power over the hearts of several distinguished young men, whom, contrary to all probability, he gained to the Society. Among others may be cited the two brothers, Gabriel and Bernard Duenni; both were strongly captivated by the vanities of the world, before they knew the father, and thought of nothing less than of embracing the religious state. Nevertheless, both entered the Society and died in it, eminent for virtue. The father's influence was no less over men, engaged in the business of commerce. He obtained of them, notwithstanding the multitude of their engagements, that they should

give a certain amount of time to spiritual exercises, as prayer, examens of conscience, and the frequentation of the sacraments. One, in particular, was the edification of the whole city for his piety; he was a rich merchant, named Gallien. Having chosen the father for his confessor, he became not only an excellent Christian, but a spiritual man in every sense of the word, so that he one day said to his holy director: "I do not envy the prayers of the Religious of the Society, but only their obedience." He had made so great progress in prayer, that it had become, as it were, his food and his life. Not content with giving to it the first moments of the day, he consecrated whole evenings to it. As soon as he had finished his business, he shut himself up in his oratory, and said to our Lord: "I come, O my God, to rest myself with Thee, for these temporal cares fatigue and dry up the soul." God favoured him with the sweetest consolation, because, in lending himself to his business, he did not give his heart to it. The favours he enjoyed did not, however, so fully satisfy him, as to prevent his envying the happiness of religious men, in being able to act always through obedience, under the direction of superiors, and of a spiritual father, whom they have close at hand. He supplied for it as well as he could, by giving his confessor entire authority over his proceedings. He felt no less the privation of the vow of poverty, than that of obedience; therefore, he gave large alms to impoverish himself in a holy way, knowing well that by thus em-

ploying his riches, he was purchasing the kingdom of heaven. A retreat of eight days, made by him in our college, finished the work of his sanctification; he received during that time so much light, that he said to Father Balthasar, when he left, "Before I came, father, I did not know how to live, but God has made known to me now, how to begin."

Thus did the father, by his pious efforts and his experience, gain by little and little, persons of all states to evangelical perfection, but it cost him much to do it. They came frequently to him at the college, and, on his side, he seldom passed a week without going to see them, at least in the beginning. He also went to see those who sent for him, to speak with him on matters of conscience. It was not necessary even to ask him to do these things, he would do them of his own accord, whenever he thought the good of souls required it. I will relate an interesting anecdote with reference to this subject.

A pious lady of high rank, who wished to advance in perfection, desired to place herself in the father's hands, from whose direction she had formerly derived great benefit; but her relatives, who had no great friendship for the Society, opposed it, and her husband absolutely prohibited it. In her sorrow, urged no doubt by Divine inspiration, she went to the holy father, and asked him to visit her, saying that one single visit from him might change the state of things. The father willingly consented, and appointed the day and hour

when his visit should be made. The pious woman took care at the fixed time, to assemble her whole family, and scarcely had they all met together, than Father Balthasar was announced. There was a good deal of surprise, perhaps of annoyance, but nothing of it appeared outwardly. The father, after the usual forms of politeness, turned the conversation to an edifying subject, and one that was appropriate to the occasion: he spoke of Jesus Christ, of the right He has to our service, and so touchingly, that his hearers all burst into tears. This conversation changed them so much, that they became friendly to the Society, and no longer hindered their relative, from choosing for her guide a man so learned and pious. They ended by following her example, and were induced to confess and communicate frequently, and had reason to rejoice in the benefits they derived from it.

Another instance is still more extraordinary. The father, when travelling, came to a monastery, in which were several Religious whom he knew. Invited to give an exhortation to the community, he consented, and spoke with so much energy, that all, without exception, wished to make a retreat of eight days under his direction. He gave it to them, and the effect was wonderful. Their provincial, a Religious of great virtue, having heard of so marvellous a change, wished to judge of it personally. He went to spend a few days in this house, and was filled with joy, in observing the peace, recollection, and silence that reigned there, and the promptitude of all in practising

obedience. Moved even to tears, he exhorted them to persevere in these holy dispositions, and going afterwards to see Father Balthasar, he overwhelmed him with thanks, and begged to be received as one of his disciples.

Thus does God manifest His power and the sanctity of His faithful servants. "How can the greatness of God fail to be acknowledged," says Cassian, "when it shows itself by such wonderful changes in souls? Who, but Him, can make a proud man humble, an avaricious man liberal, a sensual man penitent, a tepid and cowardly soul generous and fervent?" This is even more wonderful than the conversion of a great sinner; for the last, warned of his evil state by the reproaches of his conscience, feels the necessity of being converted; while the other thinks all is well, because he is not conscious of any mortal sin." St. Bernard was of this opinion, when he said to some Religious, whose tepidity had given place to fervour: "The finger of God must be acknowledged here, for He moves hearts as He pleases, and can change with equal facility, sinners into penitents, and tepid souls into saints. Why cannot I go to visit you, to behold with my eyes this new miracle, for I would have you know, my brethren, that your return to fervour is not a less grace, than that which called you from the world into religion. You would much more easily find many converted seculars, than one improved Religious. A tepid soul that casts off sloth, and increases in virtue, is rare upon earth." This,

however, was done by Father Balthasar, whose grace was not so much that of converting sinners, as of promoting the perfection of just souls. What shall I say of the benefits he bestowed on us, by the exhortations he gave every Friday, according to our custom? In the first, which he made at the College of Métine, he spoke so as to inflame all hearts, insomuch, that several months later, the extraordinary fervour with which he had inspired his hearers, existed in all its strength. One of the fathers of that house, who, up to that time had shown too much attachment to his own judgment, was cured by that one conference. Another said, on going out: "Let us be guided by this Father Rector, he is a man of prayer, God is with Him." I can myself speak here as a witness. Spending a day, when travelling, in the college where he was, I had the happiness of hearing his weekly exhortation. I say that it was a happiness; for the unction of his words deeply moved me, and some sentences, with which the Spirit of God inspired him, have remained from that time engraved in my memory, and have been to me of the greatest possible service. It was on the Friday before Christmas, that I heard this precious exhortation. During the night of this festival, when celebrating solemn mass, at which many seculars were present, preparing for communion, he addressed them a short exhortation "On the Respect and Love we owe to the Divine Infant just Born," and he spoke with a tender devotion that brought tears to every eye. He had a special gift

for quieting troubled consciences, and restoring peace to hearts, as I will show hereafter by several examples. One single argument from him was enough to produce this happy effect, so great was his authority over the souls confided to his care.

An officer was performing the spiritual exercises under him, in the College at Métine. He proposed to him the subjects of meditation as is the custom; when he came to that on hell, he made so vivid a picture of it, that the night following, this man thought he saw the room filled with devils. This idea having put him into a kind of frenzy, he began to pursue them, sword in hand, first in his room, then along the passages, and even into the father's room, the door of which was ajar. Hearhim strike the wall, and use threatening words, he recognised his voice, and guessed the cause of his terror. He immediately told him to be quiet, in an authoritative tone. The officer, recognising him also, ceased at once; and the father, rising from bed, took him back to his room, quite ashamed of what he had done. He then reasoned with him, so as to restore his tranquillity.

His reputation for sanctity and the power of his words, attracted to him a crowd of Religious and seculars, who desired to consult him on spiritual matters, and all returned proclaiming the good he had done them. I might adduce many proofs of this; I will confine myself to the testimony of a venerable Carthusian Father. This Religious, in calling at our house at Pallance,

heard of the eminent gifts Father Balthasar had received, for leading souls to perfection, and especially of his skill in giving the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. This was enough to inspire him with the wish, of making them under such a director. In consequence, he set out for Métine, where he accomplished his holy design; and on his return to Pallance, said to our fathers: "This man of God received me as if I had been an angel from heaven, though he was loaded with other occupations. I spent sixty days under his guidance, and I can safely say that of all the spiritual men with whom it has been granted me to live, none ever exercised so great an influence over me. I think it would be difficult to find another master so experienced, and so wonderful for his confidence in God." This Religious added other things in the father's praise, which will be mentioned later, in due order.

It may perhaps be asked, how Father Balthasar, who had the charge of providing for the subsistence and government of a numerous college, could find time to do so much for strangers. I answer, that God, pleased with the purity and ardour of his zeal, assisted him in all his temporal affairs; that he might be more free to attend to the functions of the spiritual ministry. This is, in fact, the promise made by this good Master, in the Gospel, to His faithful servants; "Be not solicitous for what concerns food and clothing, for your Heavenly Father knows you have need of these things." "Seek first the kingdom of God

and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt. vi.) Full of faith in this divine promise, Father Balthasar sought before all things, and with admirable zeal, to establish the kingdom of God, by procuring his own sanctification, that of his brethren, and of the inhabitants of the town; contenting himself with a moderate attention to temporal affairs. In recompense, he was able to support about seventy Religious, with a very inadequate income, and without troubling himself much, thanks to the abundant alms Divine Providence sent him. A proof that this happened on his account, was, that these resources ceased with his rectorship, and it was necessary permanently to diminish the staff of the college.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FATHER BALTHASAR'S LABOURS FOR FOR THE CONVERSION OF SOULS—RISKS ENCOUNTERED BY HIM FOR THIS PURPOSE—FACTS WHICH ATTEST HIS GREAT CHARITY.

Spiritual fathers do not beget and nourish their children merely by prayer, exhortations, and pious letters; they must also, for this purpose, devote themselves to all kinds of perils, toils, and labours. It is only at this price, that they can convert them, gain them to God, preserve them for Him, and lead them to perfection. This

truth is shown in the Apocalypse, where St. John represents the Church under the figure of a woman in the pangs of painful labour; it is proved by the example of the great apostle: "I die daily," he said to the Corinthians, "to obtain the glory of your salvation." "Quotidie morior per vestram gloriam." By death he evidently meant his toils, labours, and sufferings, of which his second letter to the Corinthians, gives us a touching picture. (2 Cor. ii. 23.) I need not repeat them here, but I may observe, that he attributes the conversion of the people to these sufferings, as much as to his preaching and prayers. The same thing happened to Father Balthasar in his apostolic career. If he conducted many souls to sanctity, it was not solely by prayers and exhortations, but by bearing much fatigue, exposing himself to many dangers, sacrificing his repose, his convenience, the care of his reputation, and even of his life, to help them in their necessities, console them in their sorrows, and protect them against the persecutions of hell and the world; but let us go more into detail, and allow facts to speak for themselves.

I will begin by recalling what he had to suffer at Avila, in his defence of the illustrious Saint Teresa. His reputation as a master of spirituality, was greatly injured by the protection he afforded her, all the directors in that part looking upon her as a visionary. We can read in the life of the saint, written by herself, the contradictions he experienced on this occasion.

New trials awaited him at Métine. There, he began to be overwhelmed with occupations, and was engaged in very difficult business; afterwards, the care of the noviciate was given him for several years, and he had to exercise this office, one of the most difficult in religion, with failing health, and almost continual infirmities.

At Salamanca he was sent for by a nun who was dying, and whose confessor he was, at a time when he was attacked by fever, and had just been bled. He immediately rose from his bed, perfectly aware of the risk he was incurring, and answered the infirmarian, who exclaimed against his imprudence, "I know that this step may do me harm, but how can I refuse this consolation to a dying person?" He went, therefore, and the brother accompanied him. When he reached the sick person, she began her confession, but was obliged soon to interrupt it, as the father, exhausted by the fatigue of the walk, fainted, and was obliged to be assisted by the brother; when he came to himself, he completed his ministry, and left his penitent tranquil and consoled. On his return home the fever returned more strongly, and caused great exhaustion, on which the brother said to him, "If your reverence had believed me, you would have been spared this suffering." "That is true, brother," answered the father, "but my poor sick penitent would not have had the consolation she desired, and we must be ready to suffer anything, when the consolation of a soul is in question, especially when she is at the gates

of death; this accession of fever has also gained me an increase of merit, as this function was composed of suffering and action." The brother did not understand rightly what happened to the father in the sick room; if we may believe the prioress of the convent, Mother Anne of Jesus, a Religious greatly esteemed by St. Teresa, and consequently worthy of every confidence. She thus related the circumstance: "Being with several of the sisters in the room of the sick person, during the father's swoon, we judged it to be rather a rapture in spirit. What led us to think so was, first, that his countenance resembled that of a seraph, and then, that on coming to himself he said to the sick person: 'Be comforted, sister, great glory awaits you in heaven, and in a few days you will enjoy it.' We had no difficulty in believing this; for, besides the authority of the father, this Religious had made more progress during her eight months of sickness, than many very good Religious do in several years of health." We might add to the reasons, adduced by the Mother Prioress in support of her opinion, that God desired to reward the father's sacrifice, by consoling him in spirit, at the time that he was mortifying and ill-using his body.

Another instance of his charity is still more remarkable. At the time he was master of novices at Métine, having one day asked one of them if he was happy in his state, the young man replied: "I like the religious life very much, but there is one thing that frightens me, and that I

dare not tell you." "You must tell me, however," answered the father, "for I wish to know it. You must not have any secrets with me, otherwise you will become the sport of the spirit of darkness, who is very clever in turning to his profit the slightest reservations." "Well, father," answered the obedient novice, "though it costs me much, I will open my heart to you. What is hard to me in the religious life, and renders it insupportable, is, that your reverence should come every night and strike me cruelly during my sleep." Father Balthasar, on hearing this, conjectured that the devil assumed his form, to ill-treat this young man, whose conduct was excellent, in order to make him quit the noviciate. Desiring to prevent such a misfortune, he consoled him with fatherly kindness, saying, "It is not I, my son, be assured of it, that torments you in that manner; therefore, when he who does this, knocks at your door, answer him, 'If you have leave, come in; if not, go and ask it of the father master.'" The following night, the novice hearing a knock at the door, at the usual hour, intended to answer as the father had told him, but without thinking, he changed the order of the words, and instead of saying, "If you have leave, come in," he began by "Come in." The subtle spirit entered before he could add the rest, and struck him more cruelly than ever, which plunged him into still greater desolation. Happily for him, he had the wisdom to go to the father the next day, and tell him his sorrowful adventure. The

father was at first surprised at the failure of the remedy he had prescribed, but when he knew that he had not followed the right order of the words, his wonder ceased, and he said, "If your enemy comes to-night, answer him, not as before, but as I told you." The devil came, and knocked as usual. The novice took care to make no mistake this time. "If you have leave," he said, "come in; if not, go and ask it of the father master." At these words the devil ran in a rage to the father's room, and cruelly abused him, but never came again. Such was the charity of this spiritual father, a friend of the cross of Jesus Christ, and a faithful imitator of His sufferings. Doubtless he could have freed his novice from this visitation without suffering himself, but he wished to experience what he had endured, that he might be better able to compassionate him, and exercise charity towards him, in a more generous manner.

At Villa Garcia Father Balthasar gave another proof of his charity. Having to preach one Sunday in the church of the college, he was going to prepare for it, when the prior of the convent of St. Isidore at Leon, arrived on his way to Salamanca. This Religious, who had made the exercises of St. Ignatius very successfully under the father's direction, entertained great confidence in him, and wished to confer with him on matters relating to his salvation, but as he was pressed for time, he had only three hours at his disposal. The father was obliged either to sacrifice his preparation, or refuse this good Religious the assist-

ance he asked. This alternative gave him a momentary anxiety, but having consulted our Lord, he soon made up his mind. "I am to preach on charity," he said to himself, "for this is the subject of the gospel of the day. Now, what better preparation can I make for such a subject, than by beginning to practise it? I will then hear this good Religious, that he may not go away sad and disappointed. After this act of charity, grace will be given me to preach on it to others." He therefore spent the whole morning with the traveller, who only left him half an hour before the sermon. This space he spent in prayer, then went into the pulpit, where he experienced the truth of these words of Ecclesiasticus: "No one ever hoped in God and was confounded." "Nullus speravit in Domino et confusus est." (Eccl. ii.) His sermon was in fact so powerful and persuasive, that it could not have been better after several days' preparation.

These words of St. Paul never left his mind; or rather, they were deeply engraved in his heart: "Debemus autem nos firmiores, imbecillitates infirmorum sustinere, et non nobis placere. Unusquisque vestrum proximo suo placeat in bonum ad edificationem. Etenim Christus non sibi placuit sed sicut scriptum est. Improperia improperantium tibi ceciderunt super me." (Ps. lxviii. 10. Rom. xv. 1.) "I understand these words thus," said Father Balthasar, "a good minister of Jesus Christ, should not seek what is pleasing or convenient to himself, but what is useful to his

neighbour; he should bear with the weak, tolerate their imperfections and importunities, however troublesome they may be, not through human respect, but for the spiritual good and salvation of their souls. This is the example our Saviour has left us; for He did not choose what was pleasing to nature; on the contrary, He took upon Himself the chastisement merited by our sins." Transported with the generous charity of his good Master, the father refused no labour that was necessary for the good, or even for the consolation of his neighbour; he sacrificed willingly for it, even the delights and consolations of prayer, saying with the apostle, "I seek to please all men, and not what is useful to myself, but to many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. x. 33.) The great St. Bernard acted in a similar manner, as may be drawn from his words: "Our visitors leave me little leisure, but I do not wish to complain, or withdraw myself from their pursuit. Let them dispose of me as they please, I will do everything in my power, for the salvation of their souls, convinced that in helping them I serve God; instead of seeking my own interests, I will try to do good to others, and I shall lose nothing by it; for I am persuaded, that nothing is more advantageous to me, than the practice of charity." (Serm. 52 in Cant.)

Nothing is more pleasing to God, than this disinterested zeal in His ministers. In proof of it, I will relate what one day happened to Father Balthasar, when he refused to perform a service,

on account of another work, which seemed to him more important. Having been summoned to Burgos on important business, he asked on his way hospitality from a lady of great virtue, who had consulted him on spiritual matters. She had long wished to enter a monastery of St. Teresa, but her worldly condition not enabling her to offer the dowry required by the saint, she had little hope of accomplishing her wish. The arrival of the father, whose relations with the saint were well known to her, reanimated her hopes. "Father, if you wish," she said to him, "you can procure my admission into one of the monasteries of Carmel, I entreat of you to render me this great service." "Willingly," replied the father, "if you agree to take your place, among the sisters charged with the house work." The pious lady, who loved nothing so much as humility, gratefully accepted the proposal. The father undertook to procure her admission. Nevertheless, he was a long time before he fulfilled his promise, the multiplicity of his business having prevented it. On another occasion of his visiting Burgos, the lady, knowing he would be in the neighbourhood, begged her confessor to remind him of his promise, and ask him to fulfil it very soon. "I cannot do so just at present," said the father, "I must go whither duty calls me; but at my return I will do without fail what I promised." The confessor having related this answer to the person interested, she said, "Ah! the father will not do what I ask him; very well, I will ask Almighty God to oblige

him to do it against his will." She then ran to the church, and, prostrating herself before the tabernacle, prayed with great fervour. At that very time the father was preparing to leave, and the horses were at the door, but, suddenly, he was seized with so violent an attack of fever, that he was obliged to give up the idea, and go to bed. He had no difficulty in guessing the cause of this sudden illness. He therefore sent a messenger to the pious woman, to ask her to pray for his cure, assuring her that he would not go away until he had written to St. Teresa in her favour. Stéphanie, at this news, began to pray, and immediately the fever left him. On leaving his bed, the father at once fulfilled his promise, and the next day continued his journey.

CHAPTER XIX.

HE ESTABLISHES A NOVICIATE AT METINE, AND GOVERNS IT—HIS TALENTS AND SUCCESS IN THIS OFFICE.

Up to the time of which we are speaking, Métine had belonged to the province of Toledo, but the general having formed a new province out of that part of Castile, the college of Métine was chosen for the noviciate, and Father Balthasar, who was rector of the house, was also appointed master of novices. The intention of superiors, in

giving him these two offices, was to afford him more power and facility in making a fervent noviciate. They were not disappointed, for God had given him a singular talent for this ministry, and he neglected nothing to make it available. It is true that Providence placed in his hands, what we may call first-rate subjects; capable, consequently, of bearing the perfect discipline to which he subjected them. Some of them were young, and of distinguished families; others were older, but singularly gifted; some had shone in the world through their learning and science; nevertheless, all were as little children before him, allowing themselves to be guided with perfect docility and humility. They could not, indeed, act otherwise, seeing, as they did, his great skill in spiritual things. This holy man, in fact, received lights which made known to him the secrets of hearts, so that he saw clearly the attraction of each one, his state of perfection, the degree of virtue to which God called him, and what hindered his faithful correspondence with it. His novices had only to say a word to be understood; therefore, they were convinced that he read their hearts, and saw all that passed there. This was his method of conducting them. He first applied himself to make them men of prayer, knowing by experience that this holy exercise is the source of all spiritual goods. For this end, he required them on entering, to make the spiritual exercises for thirty days, and he employed this time in thoroughly instructing them, in everything that contributes to

unite the soul with God, and to enable her to enjoy His sweet familiarity. Those who were older and more versed in spiritual things, he allowed to prolong this retreat for sixty days, and even more ; to unite them more closely to God, to purify them more completely from the customs and ideas of the world, to habituate them to solitude and recollection, and teach them to converse profitably with their good Master. He loved to find in his novices a great desire of prayer, and when they asked leave to do something in addition to the rule, he allowed them to prolong this holy exercise, persuaded that they would derive from it an increase of love, and greater zeal in the practice of virtues. Though good desires are not the principal fruit of prayer, he esteemed them much, because they are the sources of good works. He was pleased when his novices had many of them, and encouraged them by saying : "This is what God has made known to me on this subject. If the desire we feel in our hearts, comes from Him, He has not sown the seed in our hearts to leave it to die there. He will make it bud, grow, and fructify, because His works are perfect. When, then, any new desires arise within you, rejoice, for it is certain that He wishes you to reap a more abundant harvest." He was far from proposing prayer to these young men, as an end in which they might rest, but as a powerful means of mortifying their passions, and amending their conduct. Consequently, mortification was the second thing he tried to inculcate, exercising them in it with

particular care, chiefly in those things which were humbling to pride, in order to ground them deeply in humility. They entered so completely into his views, that they neglected nothing which could make them appear contemptible, concealing what did them honour, and manifesting what was likely to lower them in the esteem of others. There was a strife amongst them, which should appear most narrow-minded, ignorant, or indiscreet, and this was done so naturally, that they might have been taken for idiots. If any fault escaped them, they never omitted to accuse themselves of it publicly in the refectory, and when they had nothing to say, they asked leave to be accused publicly by their brethren. Through their love of abjection, they went to fetch water from the public fountains, and meat from the butchers' shops for the house. The worst clothing, and commonest food were chosen by them; they delighted in household employments, each strove to be the first, and to secure the most painful and disgusting task for himself. They carried the mortification of the senses so far, that it was necessary to tell them to raise their eyes, when something required their attention. Their zeal for corporal mortification was carried to such a height, that they would have injured their health seriously, if the father had not been careful to control it. In fact, this noviciate was the world upside down, if I may say so, for everything sought by the world was shunned there, and those things earnestly sought after, which it avoids with horror. Even in this they

would have gone too far, had their master been less wise; but the father always kept them within the bounds of discretion. "Be careful," he would say, "to avoid all singularity in your conduct; true perfection does not consist in finding out new paths, but in walking in the old way with fervour and discretion."

This excellent state of the noviciate, was in great measure the result of the exhortations he gave every other day, on the various methods of making progress in virtue, and of the conferences, that these young men held amongst themselves on these subjects, on the intermediate days. No one can understand the force of his exhortations, without having heard the holy man. His influence over hearts was exerted with so much unction, strength, and tact, that he obtained from them whatever he wished, and efficaciously led them to do what he judged expedient according to circumstances. It was a sight both curious and edifying to see the good novices go out from his instructions. Sometimes they appeared sad and distressed; at another joyous and full of confidence, but always ready to do what their master required of them. His words had no less efficacy and strength in his private conversations, than in his public addresses. His custom was to see each of his novices once a week, to make him give an account of conscience, and to give him the advice he needed, and on these occasions he consoled the afflicted, humbled the presumptuous, animated the slothful, encouraged the timid, supported the weak, restrained the

indiscreet, raised up the depressed, enlightened those who required it, and encouraged all to labour unceasingly at their advancement. When they came to manifest to him their temptations, these often vanished before he could give them an answer; God so permitting it to increase their confidence, and reward the candour of their disclosures; at most, one word from him sufficed to restore calm to their souls. While they spoke to him he prayed, and kept his eyes fixed on his crucifix, asking from God the light he needed. We can, therefore, understand how his answers wrought such wonderful changes in souls. We will mention some examples.

Among his novices was one, who, while in the world, had refused several advantageous marriages. This young man, being one day greatly tormented with carnal temptations, went in haste to the father, and told him he wished to go back to the world and marry, that he might serve God without so many combats. After listening tranquilly to all that the temptation urged the poor novice to say, he turned towards him, and said in a low voice: "God wishes you to be a Religious, and you wish to marry; see if these two are compatible." Nothing more was required to banish the temptation so completely, that it never returned.

I will add a fact concerning myself. In my first conversation with this great master at the beginning of my third probation, I had to make to him a manifestation of conscience, and while I

was speaking to him of my imperfections which were very numerous, he listened to me in silence, his eyes as usual, fixed on his crucifix; then he made me this answer: "Your virtue, instead of being mature, is still in a state of infancy, it will require to be nourished and strengthened." I retired quite confused, knowing well that what he said was true; but at the same time, I admired his penetration in perceiving my wants, and his judgment in applying the necessary remedy; for in fact, I needed humiliation more than much reasoning. This made upon me so strong an impression, that I determined at once to quit this state of childishness, and mortify what opposed my progress.

I know for certain, that God sometimes revealed to him the secrets of the hearts of his novices, which taught him how to act in their regard. Consequently, he answered in one way or another, or gave no answer at all, to mortify them more. He had also the custom, when he wished to try them, of making them wait, and then sending them away without a word; but he only acted thus towards those, whom he knew to be capable of bearing this trial. Father Gilles de Mata has related two facts which deserve mention.

"When I was going to begin my second probation," says this Religious, "my superiors sent me to Métine, which college was then governed by Father Balthasar. My first duty, when I arrived at this house, was to make known to him my conscience. I begged him, therefore, to hear me,

and he told me to go to his room the next day, at a fixed hour. I did not fail to go, but it was in vain; it was no use knocking at the door, he did not answer. The next day it was still better; he went into his room, and passed by me, without telling me to follow him. I returned at the same hour for sixty-six days, without ever being admitted. He knew very well, however, that I was there, for he often saw me, either in coming out or going in, and besides, I was careful to make noise enough to warn him of my presence. On the sixty-sixth day I received a letter from my provincial, ordering me to leave Métine, and go back to the house I had come from. In taking leave of Father Balthasar, I could not help complaining, that I had never been able during so long a space of time, to obtain a single audience, while all the other novices were admitted to speak to him, as often as they wished. 'I knew,' he answered, 'that you had no troublesome temptations, therefore, I preferred to hear the others.' My surprise was great, seeing that he knew my interior, though I had never spoken to him, nor to any one in the house. I returned, however, very well satisfied, and more desirous than ever of advancing in spirituality."

The same father related another very similar circumstance. When the holy man was at Val d'Olet, a Religious of the Society came from a distance, expressly to consult him on his wish to go to Japan to labour for the conversion of infidels. Having sent word to the father that he

wished for an interview, he had to wait two hours, after which the father, having to go into the town, passed him without a word. On his return, he again made him wait two hours, and then, as if in haste, asked him what the case was? The Religious having opened his mind to him, he replied; "Do not be uneasy, if such be the will of God, you will receive from Rome an order to depart." Some years later, he received a letter from the General, telling him to go on the mission he desired. When the Father's novices discovered their temptations to him, it sometimes happened, that instead of answering, he contented himself with saying, that the matter must be recommended to God, and in his next exhortation, though speaking in general, he would give to each of those who had made known their difficulties to him, the necessary remedy. His example was even more efficacious than his words, in leading others to virtue. In everything that regarded perfection they always saw him at their head; and his whole life was a faithful representation of his exhortations, which rendered his noviciate extraordinarily fervent, and celebrated throughout the province; insomuch that many ancient fathers came to Métine, less to hear the powerful exhortations of the master, than to enjoy the sight of so fervent a noviciate. Father Sancio, a celebrated preacher of Salamanca, was so edified, that he called out, full of holy enthusiasm: "O why is not my voice strong enough to be heard in all the houses of the Society? I will say nothing but this: Métine,

Métine, Métine. Most certainly, if all our Religious could see and imitate what goes on at Métine, they would be happy indeed."

Our Father General, who was then St. Francis Borgia, having heard the fervour of this house mentioned, conceived so great an esteem for Father Balthasar, that he wished to place the noviciate of the province of Rome under him, but as there were difficulties in the way, he made up for it, by adding to the noviciate at Métine, that which was then being formed at Villa Garcia, in order to increase the good this admirable master was doing. He gave his orders, in consequence, and it was not his fault if this arrangement was not carried out.

If I may here add my testimony to that of others, I will declare what I have myself witnessed. Father Balthasar had only left Métine, a few months, when I entered there to join the Society; and the fervour that had been excited by the holy man, was still existing in all its strength. This edifying sight made an impression upon me, which it would not be easy to describe. My interior was then far from tranquil; urged by the will of God to become a Jesuit, against my inclination, which attracted me elsewhere, I had struggled for six months, and still the storm was not subdued: but, when I saw the courage with which these young men, who were my companions, forgot the world, despised themselves, and practised mortification, the fervour with which they embraced the evangelical counsels, and followed in the footsteps

of Jesus Christ, peace began again to reign in my soul, and my state seemed to me so happy, that I did not know how to show my gratitude towards God. This effect, though so speedy, was none the less lasting, for, by the mercy of God, I went through my noviciate without sadness or regret, and at this very day I feel the same satisfaction. From the beginning I imagined to myself, that to live thus for eight years, would suffice to make a great saint, and experience has only confirmed me in this pleasing idea. I have thought it well to give this testimony, of the success that the zeal of Father Balthasar gained for him, with the novices entrusted to his care.

CHAPTER XX.

PROOF OF THE SAME TRUTH TAKEN FROM THE HOLY LIVES OF SOME OF HIS NOVICES.

I give here, very justly, the first place to the illustrious martyr, Francis Perez Godoi, born in the diocese of Toledo. When he was pursuing his studies at Salamanca, the happy thought having suggested itself to him to perform the spiritual exercises, Almighty God moved his heart so strongly, that he renounced the world, and entered the Society. Grace did not gain him, however, without struggles. The motive of his resistance was slight enough in itself, but it seemed to him

serious, and it was very near arresting him in his course. In this circumstance there is so excellent a lesson of humility, that I cannot pass it over in silence. When he reflected on the sacrifices he should have to make, he felt no difficulty in leaving his family, renouncing his fortune and worldly prospects, depriving himself of the comforts of life, and sacrificing his liberty; but the one thing that stopped him short, and was very near making him fail in his election, was, that he must cut off his long and black moustaches. What a pity! The attack was severe, and the victory for a long time doubtful, until at length, grace overcoming vanity, he took a pair of scissors and cut off this remarkable obstacle. Feeling no longer courage to return thus disfigured to the world, he asked to be admitted, and was at once sent to Métine.

His conduct was not what might have been expected from this singular beginning; for he became one of the most fervent and exemplary of the novices, through the influence Father Balthasar gained over him; he especially distinguished himself, by his diligence in performing the smallest actions in the most perfect manner. Thus, for example, when the father master sent him to the kitchen, he worked at the dishes until they were quite bright and shining, which could not be without much disgusting and painful labour. Some one asking him one day, why he took so much pains to brighten utensils, which would again be blackened, he answered: "That as he was accustomed to offer every night to the

Queen of Virgins all the actions of the day, he should be ashamed to offer her anything dirty." This answer clearly proves his devotion to that great Queen, and the benefit he derived from it. He never neglected any opportunity of mortification, and his practices were not of the easiest kind. Though he sought the most exquisite cleanliness in regard of others, he was seen to take in the kitchen the dirtiest cloth to wipe his mouth and hands, that he might overcome the repugnance of nature. Once, when he was travelling with Father Sa, he perceived that the novice's face was swollen and bleeding, without seeing any cause for it; but looking closer at him, he found that a wasp was stinging him, while he made no effort to remove it, and if the father had not taken care to drive it off, the poor youth would have quietly allowed it to finish its work. Thus early did he begin to prepare for the martyrdom, which ended his life. What most contributed to inspire him with this wonderful fervour, were the inflamed exhortations of his holy master, and especially certain sentences, which he made use of in his discourses, after profoundly meditating on them, sentences which he proposed to his novices, as so many columns of the spiritual edifice, and which he inculcated so strongly, that they never could forget them. For example, if he wished to animate them to remain firm in their vocation, and to fulfil its obligations courageously, he would say: "Let not one among you, degenerate from the noble sentiments, that belong to the children of God."

This sentence made a deep impression on the mind of young Godoi, and was of great assistance to him, in a very delicate circumstance which I will relate.

His place in the refectory was near Father Balthasar, most likely at his right hand. The father offering him something one day, the young man did not see it, and required to be touched; and then, to see what it was, he had to turn his face completely round. The father concluded from this circumstance, that his left eye was defective. On leaving the refectory he took him aside and questioned him, when Godoi acknowledged this infirmity, and added that he had concealed it, in the examination before his admission, fearing it would be a sufficient reason for his rejection. This discovery grieved the father, who was obliged to speak of it to the provincial, and knew that the novice's exclusion was certain. One single means of escaping the misfortune remained; it was to make him choose the missions, and he proposed it. "Your infirmity," he said, "is a reason for exclusion. The missions alone can enable you to be received into the Society. If, then, you wish to join, you must ask to be associated with the forty who are going to Brazil, if you have sufficient strength and courage for this." "I accept this proposal, father," answered the generous novice, "no ministry could be more pleasing to me." Father Balthasar then went to see Father Azevedo, the Provincial of Brazil, whither he was going to conduct the forty, and

spoke to him in favour of the young novice. "He is a perfect novice," he said to Father Azevedo, "and has only this physical defect. He will edify every one, and may be useful to you in more ways than one; for besides his education, he can play the guitar remarkably well, and this talent may please the savages, and help to subdue their ferocity." This information pleased Father Azevedo, who received him into his apostolic troop, whose glorious martyrdom he shared, for all were massacred at sea by a Calvinist corsair. Under the axe of the executioner, young Godoi, raising his voice, said to his companions: "Courage, my brethren; let us not degenerate from the noble sentiments that belong to the children of God." This sentence, which was Father Balthasar's, had a wonderful and almost electrical effect, and greatly contributed to the heroism of their sacrifice, as was made known by the only novice that escaped the massacre.

Another of Father Balthasar's novices, with whom I was extremely intimate, was Antony Padillo, whose holy life deserves notice. Struck by the early death of his father, and reflecting that he could not be certain of a longer life, he preferred the humble state of a Religious, to the presidency of the Council of Castile. It was grace that inspired him with this holy thought, and when he wished to make his choice among the different orders, he felt himself attracted to the Society by its reputation for fervour. One of his uncles, a canon of Toledo, informed of his

resolution, undertook to oppose it. He made use, for this purpose, of every argument that flesh and blood can furnish to worldly men; the enjoyments his fortune would procure him, the necessity of perpetuating an illustrious family, and the dignities which he might attain. He told him, finally, that he defied him to give him solid reasons for his determination. Antony replied in a letter of eight pages, in which he declared the motives which induced him to leave the world, and enter the Society of Jesus. Dr. Velasquez, one of the dignitaries of the chapter of Toledo, and later Archbishop of Compostella, having read this letter, said to the canon, who had consulted him upon it: "This justification is too well reasoned to be the work of so young a man; it has doubtless been dictated to him by some able Religious; if, however, he has done it himself, his vocation evidently comes from God, and I advise you not to oppose it." Thereupon the canon wrote to his nephew: "Your letter is very strong, but it has not convinced me, because I have easily perceived that it is not your own. At your age, persons do not feel and reason in this manner." Antony being very desirous to undeceive his uncle, went at once to the Dominican college and asked the professor of theology if an oath was ever allowable. "Certainly," answered the doctor, "it is even meritorious, when there are good reasons for using it." "Have the goodness, then," said the young man, "to give me that decision in writing." The professor wrote and signed it. Antony then

confessed and communicated, after which he wrote the following lines underneath the decision: "After receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, I swear before God, and by the God whom I have just received, that all the reasons contained in my letter come from myself, and have not been suggested to me by any one." The canon having received this note, showed it to Dr. Velasquez, who said, "As it is so, his resolution comes from God; I advise you to oppose it no longer." He required, however, that Antony should come to see him, wishing himself to examine his vocation. Antony consented, and spent several days in his house, in which there was a secret design of Providence. It appeared that this canon, by name Peter Manrique, had himself been called to the Society by frequent inspirations, which he had resisted, from his attachment to worldly things; but when he saw his nephew full of contempt for the goods of this world, and invincible in his resolution to live for God alone, he not only gave up his opposition, but resolved himself to follow so noble an example, which he did by soon after joining the Society. Antony, after this victory, went to Father Emmanuel Lopez, Provincial of Toledo, and asked to be admitted into the Noviciate. The father, showing himself rather unwilling to receive him, doubtless to make him estimate this grace more highly; he went to a pillar, and placing his arms round it, said: "I will not leave this place." "Well," said the Father Provincial, "if you wish to be admitted,

you shall be, but not in this province; I will send you to Castile." Antony answering that he did not mind about leaving his own part of the country, it was decided that the Father General, who was then at Madrid, should settle this affair. The Provincial wrote to him, and received an order to send Antony to Val d'Olet. Before his departure, he had to put his affairs in order, and formally renounce all his property. Having done this, he was conducted by all his immediate relations to the house of the professed at Val d'Olet, where was the Provincial, who sent him to make his noviciate at Métine. He was then eighteen; Father Balthasar, whose wisdom was admirable, judged it expedient to be more severe with him than others, on account of his birth, as well as of his aptitude for great and solid virtues. He undertook to mortify him to the quick, in matters regarding pride and sensuality, vices very common among persons of high rank. Consequently, not content with making him conform to the diet of the community, he purposely offered him food for which he had a natural repugnance. When he perceived that anything suited his taste, he made a sign to the server to take it away; then he sent him to eat with the poor at the gate. In the distribution of clothing, the oldest and most soiled were for him. He employed him in the most servile offices, and never spared him public mortifications. The young man submitted, not only without repugnance or complaint, but with an air of perfect satisfaction.

It was a custom established by Father Balthasar, that on a fixed day, some of the novices should go with the cook to the butcher's shop, shabbily clothed, and with baskets on their heads, as if they had been his servants. He sometimes required that besides the meat contained in the baskets, they should carry some pieces in their hands. In this, as in other things, Antony would yield to no one, or rather, he made it a duty to be the first in these acts of humiliation, believing himself so much the more obliged to humble himself profoundly, as he had been greater in the world. I, who had seen him in his native town, magnificently dressed, riding on horseback, with a numerous train of servants, could not cease admiring this wonderful change, and blessing our Lord for it. His humility was so sincere, that he would in all things have been taken, for the servant of his brethren; and it was not only during his noviciate that he acted thus, but during his whole life.

God had given him talents of a superior order, and he gained great success in his studies; he became a celebrated professor of theology in the college of St. Ambrose, where I am now writing. His reputation as a preacher was no less great, but nothing of this kind diminished his humility, his obedience, and his love of a hidden life. Every one admired his talents, and did justice to his virtues; he alone thought nothing about them, as was evident by his deference for others, and his admirable simplicity. When his office of pro

fessor allowed him some little rest, he went to seek it at the noviciate of Villa Garcia, to renew his fervour; he generally spent Christmas, Holy Week, and the whole of the vacation there. During his stay, he assisted like a novice at all the exhortations, and did not omit one of the spiritual exercises. He was always remarkably attached to the rules; this was easily perceived in the colleges of St. Ambrose and Salamanca, which he governed as rector. Many of his subjects accused him of being too severe; he knew it, but took no notice, excusing the weakness of the murmurers. Such is, in fact, the misery of the children of Adam, that they usually misinterpret the reproaches and admonitions of those who are above them, attributing to passion, severity of character, or some evil intention, what is really the effect of zeal and charity. This holy man waited for death to justify him, or rather to enlighten those who complained of his conduct. Before he received the holy Viaticum, he declared before God, in the presence of all his Religious, that in the exercise of his office, he had never done or said anything, through any motive but the greater glory of his Divine Master. Nevertheless, he dreaded death, because of the account he should have to render to God, and his terror made him say: "O Lord, how great would my misery be, if Thou shouldst be as little generous towards me, as I have been towards Thee!" One of the Fathers seeing his fear, asked him if he had committed a mortal sin since his entrance into the Society? This question seemed to sur-

prise him, and made him say: "O Jesus, what a monster would be a Religious, guilty of mortal sin!" "Thank God," he added, "it is not so!" A nobleman of the court, who came to see him, seeing his trouble and sadness, asked him the cause of it. "Anxiety about my salvation!" answered the sick man. "What!" answered the nobleman, "have you any fear about your salvation?" "Undoubtedly," answered the Father, "what else should I fear, if I did not fear not to be saved?" It pleased our Lord, however, to free him from this fear, and to give him a certain assurance that he would be admitted into glory immediately after his death. It occurred as follows. One day, after receiving the Bread of Angels, he asked to be left alone, which was granted. Then, though so much weakened by sickness, that he could not move in bed, he sat up and spent two hours in prayer before his crucifix, to the great astonishment of a Father who was watching him through the chinks in the door, and heard his colloquies full of love and confidence. His confessor coming to see him afterwards, Father Antony said to him, "To-night, my soul will enter heaven to sing matins." "That is not the physician's opinion," answered the Father. "Very well," answered the sick man; "he is mistaken, and in a few hours you will be convinced of it." After these words, he again resumed his silence, then he was heard to say: "Whence comes this fear, O my good Master, since Thou assurest me that I am in Thy Heart?

If I am in Thy Heart, let us go, death has nothing to terrify me." At the close of day he asked for Extreme Unction, and wished to receive it in the presence of all. His weakness not permitting him to raise his voice, he spoke through his confessor to those who were present, asking pardon of all for his offences against them, and for his bad example. This Father, having asked him to remember him when he should be in heaven, "You may depend upon it," he replied, "for those who dwell in heaven are not ungrateful." He then began to recite in a low voice the Psalm, "Lætatus sum," and at ten he gave up his pure soul to God. Thus lived and died the disciples formed by Father Balthasar.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW HE PREPARED HIMSELF TO EXHORT HIS NOVICES, AND THE CARE HE TOOK TO MAKE THEM ATTACHED TO THE SOCIETY.

To complete what I have said of the efficaciousness of the Father's exhortations, it will be useful to make known to my readers, his method of preparing them, and the kind of arguments he commonly used to instruct his novices in the perfection required by their state. His preparation consisted less in long study than in fervent prayer; for it was his opinion, that success in this ministry

depended less on science and erudition, than on the unction and force, with which subjects of great importance were treated. When he wished to give an exhortation, he began by selecting two or three great truths; he then meditated upon them in prayer, so as thoroughly to comprehend, and, as it were, digest them, proving them by some texts of Scripture and sentences of the saints, which God recalled to his mind. Then, being master of his subject, he treated it with inimitable clearness, force, and grace. If his method is so well known to me, it is because I have it from himself, for I read in his journal, where he noted the graces and blessings granted him by God, as follows:

"I have noticed that in preparing my exhortations, God gave me the understanding of truths which my own mind could not have comprehended, and suggested to me by degrees the subjects, the phrases, and even the expressions which I ought to use. I felt, however, that He required of me some study, but in moderation, for too much application would have been hurtful. In vain do I try to prepare myself long before: it is only when I am about to speak, that He communicates to me His ideas, and I am so much accustomed to rely on this assistance, that I feel no anxiety on this subject."

In his conferences, the Spirit of God gave him even greater assistance, for, as he could not foresee the questions we should ask, he came without preparation. Hence it arose, as I have often

remarked, that he spoke at those times with extraordinary force and unction. One of the brothers, who had remarked the same thing, asked him one day the reason. He replied: "The cause of the difference between my conferences and my exhortations, is no doubt, that it is I who speak of God in my exhortations, but in my conferences, God speaks through me." He meant, or at least we so understood it, that not being able to prepare for his conferences, God supplied for it by His inspirations; but that he prepared his exhortations, in which, consequently, his own study and industry had some share; besides which, this ministry, from its own nature, tended rather to instruct than to move us. To show more clearly the end he had in view, both in his exhortations and conferences, I will enter into some further explanation. These two exercises, though different, have this in common, that they tend chiefly to three ends united together, which are: first, to teach Religious what constitutes evangelical perfection, according to the institute which they have entered. Their ignorance on such a point would be inexcusable, and even disgraceful. It is, then, the duty of superiors to enlighten them on the special perfection to which they are called; but, as it is not sufficient for practice, that the understanding should be enlightened, the second end is to move the will, and inflame it with so great a love of the perfection required, that it may form the sincere and generous resolution of employing all the means of attaining it,

and of sacrificing whatever can oppose it. The third, which follows naturally from the last, is to determine them to act, in conformity with their resolutions on the subject. These were the ends Father Balthasar proposed to himself, in his exhortations as well as his conferences, dwelling much longer on the first than on the second, but following up this and the third, with more force and unction.

Thus did this great master form his disciples, and he recommended to them regarding this subject, three highly important things, which should be specially noticed. "Walk," he said to us, "in the perfection of your Institute, by the mind, the heart, and the practice; by the mind, conceiving a high esteem for it, and considering it as a counsel and direction coming from God; by the heart, loving it as the happiest and most important thing in the world; by practice, in endeavouring to conform all the actions of your lives to it. In walking thus in the path of your Institute, do not forget that you have three superiors to please; God, the man who holds His place, and reason." He cited on this point the following reflection of a brother coadjutor, whom I shall have to speak of later on. "I have," he said, "three superiors, God in heaven, Father-rector in the college, and reason in myself; but these three are one, for it is always God that governs me, either by others, or by Himself." To attain this threefold end, the Father usually made his exhortations on the rules of the Society, but with

remarkable ability. To give an idea of his method, I will try to retrace here a few that I myself heard, when I was making my third probation under him. The notes that I then took, though very concise, will recall to me at least the principal ideas. "Each religious order," he said, "has certain means of perfection peculiar to it, which distinguish it from others; I may even say which raise it above them. For this reason I will call them prerogatives. I have selected fourteen from our own, which shall form the subject of as many exhortations." He gave them, accordingly, to our great satisfaction, and I will give a short summary of them.

The first prerogative which he pointed out to us, is effectual detachment from things, places, and persons. From things; that is, from our abode, clothes, and furniture, being satisfied with what is given us, without keeping anything, even the smallest, unknown to our superiors: from places; being satisfied to be where we are, and shutting the door against all desires, all ambition, and keeping ourselves free from particular friendships which injure common charity, and disturb the peace of communities. "He who shall keep his heart free from attachment to these three things," said the father, "shall be truly poor in spirit, and shall enjoy a profound peace."

The second prerogative is mutual union, with great charity and fraternal love, notwithstanding the number and diversity of nations, and the differences in birth, character, and talents, preserving

as far as possible, equality in all things. For this reason, our rules grant scarcely any privilege, or authorize any dispensation on account of offices, services, or talents, but only in case of necessity or sickness.

The third prerogative is the high esteem in which virtue is held in the Society; so that talents without it are considered of little value, and subjects, who possess the greatest natural gifts, are less valued than solidly virtuous men. Hence, I conclude, that, with us, Religious men take their rank according to the judgment of God Himself, Who has no regard to natural gifts, but Who regulates His esteem according to sanctity. "Thus," added the father, with an appearance of satisfaction, "our Institute is in perfect accordance with the apostle, who said, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (v. 15.) 'Et pro omnibus mortuus est Christus; ut et qui vivunt, jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est et resurrexit. Itaque nos exhoc neminem novimus secundum carnem.'"

The fourth prerogative is the special vow of obedience, which we make to the vicar of Jesus Christ; and in regard of very difficult things, as we are obliged to go wherever he may send us; amongst the heretics or barbarians, to the most distant countries, even with danger to our lives. It is clear that this vow, so glorious to Jesus Christ, was inspired by Him to our father, for nothing could be more useful, or better suited to the period in which he instituted it. Our Society,

in fact, arose at the time that Luther rebelled against the submission he owed to the Church, and it was raised up by God, to fight against this new enemy; it, therefore, armed itself against him with the most generous obedience.

The fifth prerogative is the right which the Society reserves to itself, of dismissing from its pale those Religious who live in tepidity, which produces several great advantages: for she thereby frees herself from subjects, who might be hurtful to others, inspires all with great zeal for their advancement, and keeps up the perfection for which she was established.

The sixth prerogative is prudence and discretion in penances and corporal austerities, that the weak may not do too much, and the strong too little. It is true that our dead rule, that which is written, prescribes nothing on this subject; but the superior, who may be called the living rule, supplies for this silence, by enjoining to each one the mortifications he knows will be useful to him, taking into consideration his strength and his necessities. Besides, if the written rule lays down no special practice of mortification, it recommends this virtue in general, and requires it in the greatest perfection, in the abnegation of self-will.

The seventh prerogative is the daily practice of penances, which are performed in the refectory for trifling failings; the obligation of accusing ourselves of our faults, and the humiliation of hearing ourselves accused by others, either in private or in public, all of which are very painful to nature.

The eighth prerogative is the obligation of manifesting our conscience to the prefect of spiritual things, and to superiors, whence results the twofold benefit of escaping the illusions of our own judgment, and of finding in the avowal of our faults, a strong means of overcoming them.

The ninth prerogative is detachment from our relatives, to so great an extent, that many consider as a cross, the obligation of remaining in their own country.

The tenth prerogative is exemption from taking part in the election of superiors, and the engagement we contract, of neither desiring nor seeking after any dignity, either in the Society, or in the Church. How admirable is this foresight! for in removing from the Religious all these subjects of disquiet, the Society preserves them in greater peace, and more profound humility, prevents discord, roots out ambition, and causes them to be occupied solely with their spiritual advancement.

The eleventh prerogative is the liberty possessed by the Society of trying its subjects as it pleases, sending them on pilgrimages and missions, in order to exercise them, and know them better. It is certain that if they are called by God, free intercourse with their neighbour will be no detriment to them; if, on the contrary, these trials are injurious, it is a proof they have no vocation, and they either withdraw of their own accord, or superiors speedily dismiss them, for fear that by keeping them longer, their dismissal might be more hurtful to them.

The twelfth prerogative is the sublime end of our vocation, and the reputation enjoyed all over the world by the Society ; for though the last to be founded, it is not, however, inferior to the others either in esteem, or I venture to say, in reality. What means are wanting to it, to promote the greater glory of God, and labour efficaciously for the salvation of souls ? Without speaking of the exemplary life led by our Religious, the Society offers science and erudition to educated persons; to the people, the use of the sacraments ; to spiritual souls, the exercises of our holy founder ; to young men, education in the colleges; to children, instruction in religion ; to infidels, apostolic men full of zeal and courage; to all, the powerful help of her holy sacrifices and prayers.

The thirteenth prerogative is an obedience, which leaves nothing more to be desired, for it extends to all things lawful; easy or difficult, honourable or abject ; is rendered to all superiors great and lesser, whatever may be their defects or qualifications ; is observed in its perfection by affection of the will, submission of the judgment, and the entire accomplishment of what is prescribed, embraces not only the substance of the command, but the method of executing it, without noticing the manner in which the command is given, whether it be agreeable or disagreeable.

The fourteenth, and last prerogative, is the incessant war waged by the world against the Society, a war which is very advantageous to her, as it keeps her in humility, obliges her to have

continual recourse to God, and to place her hopes solely in His Providence, which makes her grow and spread, as the Church herself did, amidst the persecutions of the early ages. Such were the good and salutary instructions, given us by this able master, to make us more and more attached to our Institute, and embrace the perfection of the first fathers; instructions, of which I can offer only the matter, as it is impossible for me to give his strength and unction.

CHAPTER XXII.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY FATHER BALTHASAR TO COMPLETE THE TRAINING OF THE NOVICES.

Novices being usually only children in virtue, require instruction in everything concerning religious perfection; their interior reformation, which is known only to God; and that of the exterior, which cannot escape the eyes of their neighbour. Nothing was omitted in the father's exhortations. His instructions were so complete, that he could say with the apostle: "I instruct all my disciples in true wisdom, without reserve, that they may be all perfect in Jesus Christ." (Coloss. i. 28.) I have had in my possession a list which he had made, of the subjects to be treated of; in his instructions it contained forty-four chapters, of so great importance, that I think it well to offer them

to my readers, as very useful documents for their greater perfection, but I will reduce their number, that I may not exceed the limits I have prescribed to myself.

The first chapter treated of the method of prayer, in order to make it usefully and with fruit; of the employment of time between the different pious exercises, and the manner of keeping ourselves in the presence of God.

The second pointed out the method of reciting the Divine Office, and other vocal prayers devoutly; and of profiting by spiritual reading.

The third had for its subject the examen both general and particular; and on this occasion, the father made it appear, how important it is for spiritual men to avoid the smallest faults, without however being cast down by those which escape them, when they do what they ought to avoid them; but having confidence in the goodness of God, that He will apply a remedy to them.

The fourth spoke of the method of making a good confession; of compunction of heart, of the penances we can perform without going to any excess of rigour; and of the spirit with which exterior mortifications should be animated.

The fifth was on preparation for communion and spiritual communion.

The sixth was on the mortification of our natural and evil inclinations, and the custody of the senses.

The seventh, on behaviour in the refectory, at recreation, in conversations with seculars, and on

the moderation, that must be observed in all these circumstances.

The eighth treated of humility and the knowledge of ourselves, without which there can be no humility.

The ninth, on the love we ought to have for God, on fraternal charity, mutual forbearance, and avoiding rash judgments.

The tenth, on poverty, obedience, and chastity, the observance of the rules, and indifference as to places and employments, that the will of God may reign absolutely.

The eleventh, on the three companions of Jesus Christ, poverty, contempt, and pain.

The twelfth, on spiritual advancement, which depends less on our efforts and industry, than on grace, of which, however, we may be certain, if we do what lies in our power.

The thirteenth spoke of the favours bestowed on the just, and of their tribulations, of the temptations that assail them, the dispositions with which they should bear the crosses of this life, and of the equity of this conduct of Divine Providence.

The fourteenth, on peace of the soul, and the means of procuring so great a blessing.

The fifteenth, on the benefit we can derive from the society and conversation of the servants of God, and the advantage of having some one to direct us by his counsels, to restrain and reform us by his authority, and edify us by his good example.

The sixteenth, on the eight beatitudes; the operations of virtues, prudence, and the science of the saints.

These were the great and important subjects treated by the man of God in his exhortations, to communicate to his novices the necessary skill and knowledge for attaining perfection; but he insisted most strongly, on everything concerning the abnegation of self, and of our own will and judgment, supporting his exhortations on this subject by the following reasons.

"To spend the time of the noviciate otherwise than in the renunciation of self, and the acquisition of solid virtues, is to renounce perfection. If, in this place of retirement and entire freedom from affairs that do not relate to perfection, with so many instructions and good examples, you neither learn to die to yourselves, nor to live to God; how will you do so later, in the perplexities of an office, with much fewer helps, and amidst all kinds of hindrances and dangers? To neglect the present time, and reckon upon the future, is to hope for a miraculous perfection. Learned men are made, by the assiduous cultivation of sciences; and in like manner, the religious life makes religious men. Now, the beginning of this life is nothing but the abnegation of self: 'If any one,' says our Lord, 'wishes to be My disciple, let him deny himself.' 'Qui vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum.' (Matt. xvi. 24.) Make up your minds, then, my brethren, to this work of self-denial, or say plainly that you do not

wish to enter upon a perfect life. O! believe me, store up for yourself riches in this time of abundance, for the years of famine which must follow. If the Egyptians had paid more attention to the predictions of the wise Joseph; if, when they saw him filling the king's granaries, they had been prudent enough to imitate him, they would not have been obliged later to ruin themselves in order to procure bread. There are some among you, I know, who labour with holy zeal and great fervour to lay up this spiritual store; and, because the Spirit of God animates them, we have reason to believe they act wisely. What can you do better than to imitate them? Is it not disgraceful to sit down to rest, when you see your companions walking on so courageously? Perhaps you think that the time of the noviciate is lost time, because you do not spend it in the study of sciences? Be not deceived: time is not lost which is spent in laying the foundation of a building, that is to rise very high. A traveller does not lose his time, when he stops to feed the horse that carries him. A writer does not lose his time, when he interrupts his work to mend the pen which is his instrument. To study, is to labour to comprehend, and thoroughly master the science we wish to acquire; but that cannot be done without the light, which God gives abundantly to His friends, to those who walk before Him in good faith, and perform their actions at the prescribed times, through love of the Divine Will. Let us act thus, and God will grant us His light, and with it we shall succeed

in study, when the time to be devoted to it shall have arrived: but in the noviciate, it is not learning, but sanctification that God requires of us."

Not content with thus labouring at the interior reformation of his novices, the father wished to reform their exterior also, endeavouring especially to give them a high idea of religious modesty. "This virtue," he said, "is not only useful, but necessary, and indispensable to those who belong to the Society, for three chief reasons. 1. As they are obliged by their state to converse with their neighbour, they are bound to edify him, and gain his esteem; otherwise, they will be of little use to him. Now, the principal means of securing these happy results, is true religious and unaffected modesty. As we are a spectacle to God and men, as the apostle has said, we must so behave as to please God and edify men. 2. In the other orders, the cowl conceals any immodesty there may be in looks, but it is not so in the Society, where the Religious do not cover their faces. There is therefore upon us, a stricter obligation of modesty. 3. According to the rules and spirit of our Institute, we ought to be interior men, and men of prayer. For this reason, modesty is particularly necessary, as it belongs to this virtue, to restrain the senses, and negligence in guarding them, dissipates the mind, and dries up devotion; but this modesty must proceed from the interior reformation of the soul, and the remembrance of the presence of God."

The better to form his novices to the practice of

this virtue, he had made a list of the immodest actions which would be disedifying in a religious man. They were more than two hundred in number; I cannot therefore mention them all, but will give them in summary. First came motions of the head, forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth and tongue, of the hands and feet, then our postures and clothing, then acts of immodesty that are committed in the church, refectory, at recreation time, in our room, and elsewhere. He named also immodesties which may escape us in public, and in intercourse with our neighbour, by our manner of speaking, laughing, coughing, spitting, moving the hands and feet, and lastly, incivilities either towards superiors, or equals, or inferiors. I leave it to be imagined what kind of novices would be those formed in the school of so able a master, and so attentive in correcting the smallest defects; or rather, I will say, as an eye-witness, that seculars, on seeing them, could not withhold their admiration, or the expression of the edification this religious modesty afforded them. His zeal for the advancement of his dear disciples extended to the future, and foreseeing the time when he should no longer be able to encourage them by his exhortations, he earnestly recommended to them the reading of good books, according to the rule established in the Society. He was particularly desirous of inducing them to appreciate the Book of the Imitation of Jesus Christ, which he called the contempt of the world, and all had

afterwards reason to congratulate themselves, on the benefit they had derived from it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HIS SUCCESS IN THE RECTORSHIP OF SEVERAL COLLEGES, AND HIS GREAT QUALIFICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT.

His talent for governing had already shown itself, during the years in which he ruled the college of Avila as minister: but it was still more apparent when he was in possession of the authority of rector. It may truly be said, that in everything his conduct was a model for imitation. I will therefore give here a short account of it. In the first place, to prevent its being hurtful to him, he took care to ground himself more firmly than ever in humility, and he did this so deeply, that at first, he discharged his duties with extreme repugnance, knowing well that superiors have to undergo a more severe judgment than others, and perfectly understanding the extent and importance of his obligations. "Superiors," he said, "should forget themselves for the sake of others, sacrifice their rest, neglect their health, and treat themselves in all things worse than their subjects. They must also resign themselves to a life full of solicitudes, to mourn and weep through compassion for the sins of others, if they do not faithfully

discharge their duties. Murmurs, and even aversion, will often be their only reward. They will have, besides, to bear before God the defects of their subjects, their imperfections, their tepidity, their inconstancy, and their sins; responsible, not only for the evil they do, but for the good which they ought to do, but do not."

These considerations, joined to his ardent desire of sanctifying himself, and contributing to the sanctification of others, made him very severe in the beginning. He was exceedingly grieved by the defects of his Religious, as usually happens with superiors who have little experience; but he afterwards perceived, through light from above, that his grief, far from proceeding from true zeal, was the fruit of impatience and narrowness of heart; that the moment of grace must be waited for, and in the meantime, we should pray, exhort, forbear, and compassionate, instead of becoming angry; in order to imitate the conduct of Providence.

About this time a conversation with Father Martin Guttierez finished the work that grace had begun. "When I was rector," said this father to him, "I used to be much afflicted by some defects in my inferiors, and I considered this grief quite allowable, and ventured so far as to complain of it to God in prayer. But this delusion did not last long; for it pleased God to cure me of it in the following manner. One day, when I was sorrowfully lamenting in His presence my want of power to correct these imperfect Religious, He

showed me on a silver dish, a very small heart, immersed in two drops of water, and near it, in a basin, a heart so large that this quantity of water scarcely wetted it at all. I wished to know what this vision signified, and it was said to me, 'The heart which is drowned by two drops of water is yours, which is afflicted to excess by the smallest things. The great heart, which the water in the basin cannot cover, is that of God, Who supports without affliction, idolators, heretics, schismatics, the impious, and all the sinners of the earth, waiting with wonderful patience for the happy time of their conversion. Now this patience should be the model of yours.' Corrected by this vision, the father become more indulgent, and felt so much more satisfaction from having made this change, as God made known to him later, that all those whose imperfections had so much troubled him, were predestined."

This example made a deep impression on Father Balthasar, which dilated his heart, and caused the weight of his charge to press more lightly upon him. Almighty God did even more for him, for He made his office pleasant to him, and this happened as follows. On the second Sunday after Easter, as the father was making his prayer on the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, he heard interiorly these words: "A good shepherd makes good sheep; when, therefore, God gives a flock a good pastor, it is a great benefit and a wonderful grace. A flock is always good, when led by a good guide. A pastor is as a

model to his sheep ; this is what makes his office formidable. All his sheep have their eyes upon him, and accustom themselves almost as a necessity to live like him." Deeply touched by this lesson, Father Balthasar applied himself more than ever to edify his flock by his good example, and so perfectly fulfilled his office, that it may be said of him, that he was such a superior, as St. Ignatius requires, and has described in his Constitutions. I will show this in the detailed account of his conduct, for the edification, not only of superiors governing communities, but of all who are charged with any kind of government. In the first place, deeply convinced that of himself man can do no good, he placed his whole confidence in God, having recourse to Him, in the spiritual and temporal wants of his college, so that prayer was his chief means of government: then, appreciating things at their true value, and consequently esteeming sanctity before all others, talents and birth were little in his eyes, compared with virtue. "We want saints," he would say, "not noble and learned men, unless they add a pre-eminence in virtue to these natural gifts." When he found among his Religious a man truly capable of perfection, though of very moderate talents, he took particular care of him, calling him to his room, by day and night, to encourage and guide him, as we shall very soon see. By another result of his spirit of faith, he thought more of the smallest spiritual benefit, than of the most important temporal affairs. He would never

therefore allow his Religious to sacrifice to them the smallest part of their exercises of piety. This is proved by the following example. During the time that he was rector of a very poor college, he had for minister, a man who was very anxious about temporals. Whenever anything was wanted in the house, he ran to the rector to complain, and beg of him to remedy it, which was sometimes impossible. His trouble was then extreme, and until he obtained what he wanted, he could enjoy no peace. The father, more concerned for his spiritual wants than for those of the house, undertook to cure him of this excessive solicitude, and he proceeded in this manner. When he came to tell him of a new want, with his usual excitement, the rector said to him, "Have you taken care, before coming hither, to speak to God on this affair?" "No, father," the minister answered, "this thought has only just occurred to me, and I thought I must come and tell it to you without delay." "That was, however, the first thing to be done," replied the father, "go, therefore, to your room, and pray; then come and tell me what lights you have had. Do you think that this flock has no master? It has One, who loves it too much, to allow it to want what is necessary. Go then in peace, and be convinced that the subsistence of our Lord's sheep, does not depend on your industry." The minister retired, a little confused by this admonition, and began to pray. When he returned to the father, means had been found for providing what was wanted.

The same miracle having been several times renewed, he at last understood the uselessness of his anxiety, and corrected himself of it.

The wise rector had learned by experience, that Religious, whose temporal wants are supplied, apply themselves much better to their spiritual affairs. Consequently, he ordered them to be provided liberally with food and clothing. To be sure that his orders in this regard were executed, he noticed attentively what was served in the refectory, and went to all the rooms once a month, asking each one if his clothes were good, and if he wanted anything else. When any want was made known to him, he noted it down, gave his orders, and expected to be informed of their execution. Those who, through a spirit of mortification, neglected their bodies, were the objects of his special care. The sick, especially, found in him the most fatherly feelings. He frequently visited them even at night, consoled them in their sufferings, and saw that they had everything they wanted. Woe to the infirmarian who was guilty of any negligence, for he never pardoned such faults as these, and it was very difficult for them to escape his observation. A perfect model of religious discipline, he was always the first at prayer, at the examens, in the refectory, and was the first to leave recreation; he dispensed himself from no exercise, shared all labours, and did not disdain to sweep the house like the others. It is customary in the Society, for the Religious to go to the kitchen to prepare the vegetables, and wash

the dishes, in turn. The holy man was careful not to neglect this practice of humility; he performed it regularly on the first of each month, and said to those who testified surprise: "I know nothing more praiseworthy than to follow the community; it is the way to please God, and draw upon oneself special blessings."

When any one asked leave to perform extraordinary penances, his answer was, that it was better to conform in all things to the community, and that, if he aspired to excellence, he should seek to excel in that. This holy man had so great a love for this conformity, that he asked of God as a special grace, that he might be able to the end of his life, to perform the duties common to all. His prayer was not in vain; for though he was often ill, he could always so far overcome his weakness, as never to omit what was done by the community. "It may be," he said to those who blamed his conduct, "that by so doing, I shorten my life a little, but I think it is better to live a shorter time, conforming oneself to others, than to grow old through the benefit of dispensations; for nothing is more likely to introduce relaxation into religious houses." Father Ribeira, one day asking his leave to wait for the second table, to prepare himself for a discussion; he replied, that conformity was the best preparation for this exercise, as well as others. The good Religious obeyed, and his success in this action convinced him of the truth of the father's maxim.

When his inferiors wished to speak to him, they were not obliged to wait his convenience, or seek a favourable opportunity. Whenever they presented themselves, they were welcome. His kind manner convinced them of it, and they had as much love as veneration for him. If to try them, he sometimes assumed a severe countenance, he quickly returned to his usual sweetness. His friendship for them was accompanied by sincere esteem, which showed itself in his manner of treating them in public, and especially before seculars. He always spoke well of them in their absence; and in his daily intercourse with them, showed them attention in proportion to their degree. Continually occupied about them, he watched them carefully, and if any one appeared sad, he told him that a servant of God should be always joyous: and he more easily forgave some excess of joy, than the least mark of sadness. The faults of those who sinned through ignorance, or weakness, only excited his compassion. Instead of severely reproving them, he encouraged them by his kindness, to repair their fault and avoid a relapse. Through his pity for these imperfect souls, he entreated the provincial to send them to him, in preference to others, to exercise his sweet charity towards them; and God, to reward him, gave him a wonderful facility in changing them. What shall I say of his exactness in fulfilling his duties as superior? One single fact will suffice to give an idea of it, because I shall take it from amongst things com-

paratively small. The rules of the Society require the rectors to visit the Religious in their rooms, during the time of prayer; this the father did every Friday, however numerous were his occupations, and however sleepless the preceding nights might have been, and he kept up this exactness until the expiration of his office. Thus, having to leave on a Friday the rectorate of Villa Garcia, to take possession of the province of Toledo, he first visited all the rooms, and left after prayer. Lastly, to form a complete idea of the perfection with which this holy man performed his duties, we need only read the list he had made for his use, of the duties of a superior. The following is a faithful extract.

"1. The office of a superior is to serve souls for whom Jesus Christ has given all His Blood; to serve them, I repeat, as a servant serves his master, for the love of God. His services, it is true, amount to little. However, though they may be small, they merit heaven for him, provided he render them willingly, without looking for gratitude from those who receive them. To act thus, he need only consider that God, in making him superior, did not intend to make him a lord over his brethren. He has placed them on his head, instead of under his feet, and consequently, they have a right to his services. This is, in fact, what faith teaches: 'I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister,' said our Divine Master. (Matt. xx. 28.) 'You have been made a ruler,' says Ecclesiasticus, 'let not this elèvation

make you proud; but be with your brethren like one of them.' (Eccles. xxxii. 1.)

"2. A superior should be affable and accessible, that his subjects may be convinced that their importunity is not troublesome to him, and that they may have recourse to him in their wants, with as much confidence as consolation. Why should he not sometimes tell them, that he is glad to see them come to him, that it is pleasing to him that they should open their hearts to him, and that the avowal of their weaknesses will never diminish his love and esteem for them? This point," he added, "is of great importance for superiors, preachers, and confessors; for how many thousands of souls perish, from not daring to make known their interior sins!

"3. To preserve himself in humility, a superior must never forget that a college is a heavy burden, and that to govern it according to the rules of our Society, his industry is worth nothing, unless God enlighten and govern him by His grace. What is there, in fact, more difficult than to rule so many men of different characters, and keep them, so to speak, at our feet? No, this cannot be the work of man, God must Himself do it, for it belongs to Him alone to subdue wills. 'In becoming king,' said David, 'I have placed my hope in God; He keeps my people subject to my sceptre, and makes them obey my laws.' (Ps. cxliii. 2.) The most successful superior, then, will be he, who knows the best how to treat of his

affairs with God, were he otherwise of very inferior merit.

"4. If he desire to gain the wills of all, which is indispensable for the good he wishes to do, his disciples must perceive that he loves them, and is pleased to be with them; but let him beware of showing particular friendships; this would be a rock against which his vessel would break. In the beginning he would do well, to lay aside his authority for a few days, and change nothing, that he may not acquire the reputation of a severe man. By acting otherwise, he would run the risk of giving offence and closing hearts against him. He must afterwards establish a very exact discipline, but, even then, instead of commanding imperiously, he should set about it humbly and meekly, saying, for instance; "Do you not think that such a thing is an abuse, or that such a manner of acting has its inconveniencies?" &c. It is quite certain that this method is more persuasive, and conducts to our end more easily. Prudence, then, requires that we should prefer it before the method of commanding.

"5. To perform his work well, he must often have private conversations with his subjects; he must from time to time visit them in their rooms, and as often as they knock at his door, he must tell them to come in. If he is busy, they will themselves see that he cannot listen to them, and, by a few kind words, he will send them away satisfied. Let him be careful not to write, or do anything else, while they are speaking to him, for

they will think he is weary of hearing them, or that he despises them, and this idea would close their hearts against him.

"6. The superior must also carefully banish from his mind, those thoughts and plans which would distract him from the functions of his office. God has only given him one duty, the government of his house; every other affair is for him only a work of devotion, and if it interfere with the accomplishment of his duties, it is a real delusion. Let him not, then, occupy himself too much with persons not belonging to the house, he will do more for them, by forming holy religious men, than by taking upon himself their affairs.

"7. He must be in all things an exemplary man, for this is the true way to enforce his words, and deprive his inferiors of all excuse, when they fail in their duties. To reform them, he must in the first place reform himself; how can he cause the rules to be observed if he dispense with himself too easily? His office is to exhort others to do good; but in order to succeed, he must himself practise before he teaches; this is the recommendation of the Gospel: 'Oportet facere et docere.'

"8. If complaints are made to him regarding himself or others, let him be very careful not to show surprise or displeasure; on the contrary, by testifying that he is pleased with their candour, he will more efficaciously pacify them, and will obtain lights, that will assist him to govern with greater advantage.

"9. He must have a firm will, to keep down insubordination and insolence; but, in keeping up obedience, he must show the feelings of a father, that his sweetness and meekness may lighten the yoke of his inflexible firmness. Thus it is said of the Royal Prophet, that he united sweetness with uprightness. (Ps. xxiv. 8.) Nevertheless, there are occasions when it is better to yield and give way, than to insist; for it is not well to compromise the general peace for a particular interest. Whenever, then, the superior cannot subdue a rebellious will, without running this risk, charity requires that he should overlook the obstinacy of the culprit, acting towards him in a spirit of love, bearing with him as God bears with him, until this good Master visits him by His grace, and renders him capable of employing the means of perfection proposed to him. That, however, does not dispense him from doing all in his power to gain his heart and overcome his resistance.

"10. Let him never, in any case, allow himself to reprove the guilty when he feels irritated. The first thing to do, is to calm himself, and he can then correct others profitably; the reason of this advice is, that all God's commandments have reference to charity and tend to purify the heart; now, this twofold end is compromised, whenever the superior exercises his authority with impatience or aversion. He must then moderate his indignation, and take particular care that his emotion be not perceived. If he be too severe in small things, or give reproofs too frequently, his

government will be too hard, and his corrections will not have their due force in things which are important: for it is with reprimands as with bodily remedies, their power is weakened by a too frequent use.

"11. When a subject, vexed by the correction, resists his superior, he must, through compassion, restrain himself, thinking that it is the devil that troubles and irritates him; if he fail to bear with him on such an occasion, he may cause the loss of this soul, which has cost Jesus Christ all His Blood. Let him, then, practise benignity and mercy; his own weakness obliges him to it. It is written, that we shall be treated as we have treated others, for God will pardon us, if we pardon those who have offended us, and the apostle gives us this important recommendation: 'Let not yourselves be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.' 'Noli vinci a malo, sed vince in bono malum.' (Ep. Rom. xii. 21.)

"12. A wise circumspection has a good effect, but, carried too far, it becomes hurtful, wounds the heart, and contracts it painfully; while the appearance of confidence opens it and puts it at ease. In a general way, it is useful for a superior to make known to his subjects that he has a good opinion of them, and sometimes to tell them that he is pleased with their conduct. It is the way to make them love dependence, and feel his government light."

From these wise instructions, the reader can

judge of Father Balthasar's skill in governing souls.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HIS ZEAL AND SOLICITUDE FOR THE EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Each time that the father was called upon to fill the office of rector of the college, though he never neglected the important duties of the Society, the holy tribunal, preaching, catechising, the spiritual exercises, visiting prisons and hospitals, and the teaching of sciences, I may truly say that he gave a kind of preference to the ministry, that has for its object the instruction and education of children. Nothing proves the wisdom of this holy man more; for if this duty has not much honour in the eyes of the world, it is not the less true that God highly values it, and that it renders immense service to the Church and the Society. In the exercise of his zeal on this point, I noticed three things that seemed to merit particular attention.

1st. Full of esteem for this ministry, he endeavoured to induce all the members of the Society to take part in it, and for this end he alleged three motives, well calculated to arouse their zeal; the good of the children, of their parents, and the public benefit. Let us allow him

to explain these three advantages. "The greatest service," he said, "that can be rendered to children, is to instruct them well, and form their habits; for on this depends their temporal and eternal happiness; their souls, at this age, are like soft wax, which easily receives the impressions of knowledge, and virtue, and preserves them afterwards without difficulty. 'The young man,' says the Holy Ghost, in the Book of Proverbs, 'will not depart from his way when he is old.' 'Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea.' (xx. 6.) But not only does the soul receive good impressions more easily, but the body also at this age, is better adapted for the labour of study and application. I may also compare children to a virgin soil, which receives cultivation for the first time, and bears finer and more abundant fruit. It may be, that they will hereafter stray from the path of virtue, but they will return to it more easily than others. The mere remembrance of the purity of their childhood, will make them blush, and recall them to God. Happy then are children, who are well educated. I add, Happy are the parents who possess them, they will be the joy of their life, and their sweetest consolation in death. Oh! if all fathers and mothers understood their interests, they would omit nothing, to provide their children with virtuous and able masters. Unhappily it is not so; they are tenderly solicitous to provide them with food and clothing, to establish them in the world, to heap up riches for them;

and they allow them to be deprived of education: they attach no importance to the choice of their masters, as if it were a matter of indifference whether their defects are corrected or not; whether they possess religion and virtue, or not. Nevertheless, the eternity of these poor children is here in question; and whether they will afterwards give cause of sorrow or consolation. A crooked tree must be made straight while it is young, later on, it cannot be done. Children who are neglected at the proper time for forming them, will lose themselves, it is greatly to be feared; and their careless parents must answer for them before God.

"Society is no less interested in the education of the young. Do not ill-educated men disturb its peace, bring disgrace upon it, and cause all its misfortunes? What would society be, governed by men without faith, destitute of morals and principles? Read history, and it will tell you. Rulers think only of themselves, judges decide through interest or passion, and subjects revolt against their masters. No more honesty in trade, no longer any respect for propriety, no morals, no confidence, no security, no more domestic happiness, and the avenging scourge of Divine Justice instead of prosperity." These were the reasons that Father Balthasar proposed to his Religious, to make them sensible of the great importance of their ministry in the education of youth. And in order to give them a greater love for it, he lavished upon them his fatherly care, never allowed any opportunity of honouring them before their pupils

to pass neglected, was most careful that they should treat their masters with the greatest respect, showed the same attention to the lower masters as to those who taught the highest classes, and filled their hearts with sweetness, by the noble idea he gave them of their employment. "Do not think that your ministry is of slight importance," he would say, "the less the world values it, the greater will be your merit. I do not know any employment that is more useful. If you perform it well, you will gain more souls to Jesus Christ than preachers by their eloquence." Not satisfied with these general exhortations, he gave them particular instructions on the object of the Society, and the spirit which animates it in this ministry, on the method of teaching children by their example to love virtue, as much and more than by their words. "They are more inclined," he would say, "to imitate what they see, than to do what is said to them; if then, they perceive that the conduct of a master is not in harmony with his teaching, they imitate his actions, and think little of his words." He related to them on this subject, the example of St. Malachy, who, in his childhood, would never consent to be taught by a master who had done something wrong in his presence. He caused them to read a treatise of St. Bernard on the Instruction of Children, and another of Gerson, on the Means of gaining them to Jesus Christ. Lastly, he dwelt strongly on the graces, that services rendered to children, would draw upon them in this life, and the rewards they

would receive for them in the next. "If the midwives of Egypt," he said, "received such abundant blessings for having saved the children of the Hebrews, what may you not hope for, who save the souls of the children of the Church?" To confirm all I have said up to this time, of the good father's zeal for children, I will give one of his letters on this subject. There was in the Society in his time, a Father John Bonifacio, who had devoted himself to the instruction of youth, at which he laboured most successfully for forty years. The Father General having offered him a chair in theology, because he knew him to be well skilled in this science, the humble Religious refused it, and on this occasion Father Balthasar wrote him the following letter:—

"The choice that our Father General made of your reverence for a chair in theology, gave men some anxiety; but your determination to remain where you are, has greatly consoled me. I look upon it as certain, that in the place which you occupy, you will work out your own salvation and that of many souls; a thing much more needful to you, than your theology to the Society. Doubtless, there is more glory to be gained in such a position than in yours; but as you have felt it, that is not what Religious should seek after, whose duty is self-denial. If it enter into the designs of God that you should take this office, He will oblige you to it by obedience; otherwise you will have before Him the glory of having refused an honour, sought after by so many; and which was offered

to you without your solicitation. As for the humble duty you fulfil, there is nothing to prevent your asking superiors to exercise it here or there, as you think fit; but I think it better you should remain where you are, until your good angel, taking you by the hand, leads you elsewhere. This is more conformable to the example of Jesus Christ, Who remained in Egypt until the heavenly messenger who had told Him to fly, gave Him notice to return. May your reverence believe him who loves you in our Lord with his whole soul, and for your benefit has deprived himself of the advantage of having you near him." Father Balthasar spoke thus, because he knew that he wished to leave Avila and go to Métine, for the sole benefit of living under his wise government. He would, doubtless, have liked nothing better, than to have in his college a man of so great merit and experience, but he was not the man to prefer his own interest before that of others, and convinced that his brethren could not be better than where God had placed them, he carefully avoided disturbing their minds.

Not content with encouraging the masters to do their duty, the father watched particularly over the pupils, assigning for them pious exhortations every Friday, and fulfilling this useful office himself, whenever he was able. On these occasions, putting himself on a level with them, and speaking to them only on subjects suited to their requirements, he discoursed with as much zeal as if he had been before a large audience.

His discourses therefore made the strongest impression. I will give a sketch of his manner. "It is not enough, my dear children," he would say, "for you to have good masters, anxiously devoted to your instruction; you must also correspond with their efforts, by great docility, and serious application. God wills it, and your good requires it. If you are, in effect, such as you ought to be, the stars of the sky are not more beautiful and shining, than you will be in this world. Your tender age, innocent and amiable as it is, is like the seed which contains within it a rich harvest. Understand now, therefore, the honour and advantages it can procure for you. If you want models, you will find them in children of the Old and New Testament, who became great saints, from having been well brought up in their youth. When Tobias was a child, the Holy Ghost tells us, he was so only in age, for there was nothing childish in his actions. (Tob. xiv.) He remained faithful to God amid the severest trials. 'Lead a holy life,' said the apostle to his dear disciple Timothy, 'that your youth may not be despised. Keep faith and charity towards God, chastity towards yourself, humanity and integrity in your words and conversations with your neighbour.' (Tim. iv. 12.) Avoid then, my dear children, after his example, whatever may destroy in you Divine love, or soil your purity; never allow yourselves bad conversations, or words expressive of anger and impatience; avoid bad company, which is the poison of virtue." Lastly, to increase their

piety, and make them love the Queen of Virgins, he established the Congregation amongst them, or was at least its most zealous patron, finding time to interest himself much about it, notwithstanding his numerous and important occupations.

Our Father Ignatius showed particular interest in one kind of ministry, which was that of catechising children and poor people. Fearing that this employment might afterwards be neglected or despised, he wished express mention to be made of it, in the formula of the vows of our solemn profession. He made a rule that rectors of colleges should fulfil it towards their pupils for forty days, during the first year of their office, and imposed the same obligation on all the professed, for the same period. Father Balthasar possessed too much of the spirit of his holy founder, and felt too deeply the importance of this function, not to encourage it with the greatest zeal. He succeeded so well with his Religious, that catechism became their favourite ministry. He was also himself the first to give them the example. He was often seen to go out of the college on a Sunday night, to collect round him the children of the parish school, and those he met on his way, to go through the streets with them, singing canticles, and stop in a public square, or at the door of a church, to catechise them. I had sometimes the happiness of being his companion, and I can describe his manner of fulfilling this ministry. After catechising the children, he addressed the people, and never omitted to say something in his

discourses relating to perfection, and the love of God, for the sake of the devout persons who were among his hearers, thus generalizing his zeal, and giving all a share in the effects of his charity. When he stopped for a short time in travelling; instead of resting, he called the children of the place round him, and catechised them. Having gone to spend a few days at Cervera, his native place, he was seen going through the streets with a bell in his hand, to call the children together, for instruction in Christian doctrine. It was the first time the inhabitants had seen anything of the kind, and they were much surprised to see so dignified a man fulfilling this lowly office; it was not, however, through humility that he acted thus, because he considered it a very noble and exalted action. This conduct fairly entitled him to encourage us in this holy ministry; he consequently sent us every Sunday, two and two, into the neighbouring villages, to instruct the country people.

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